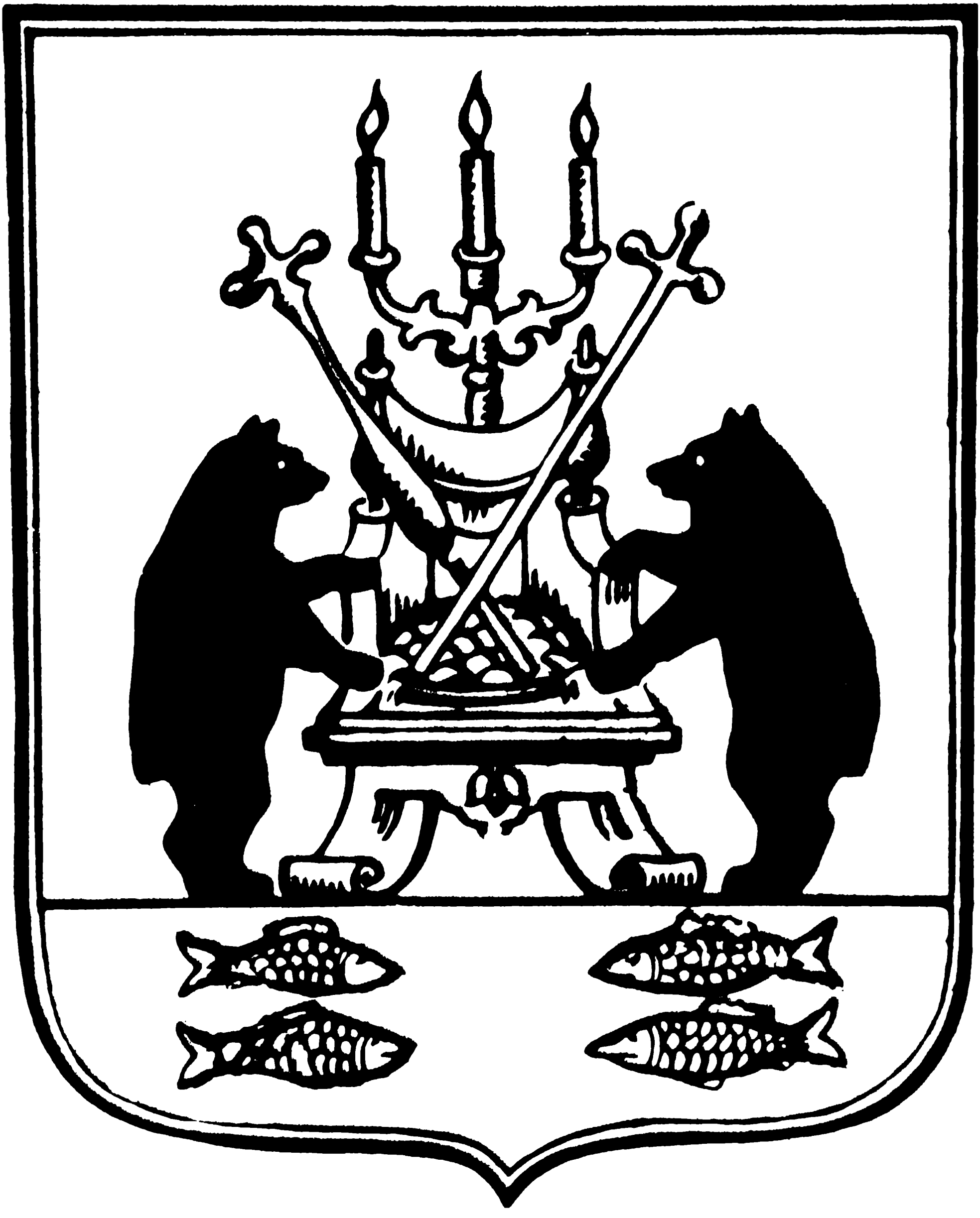
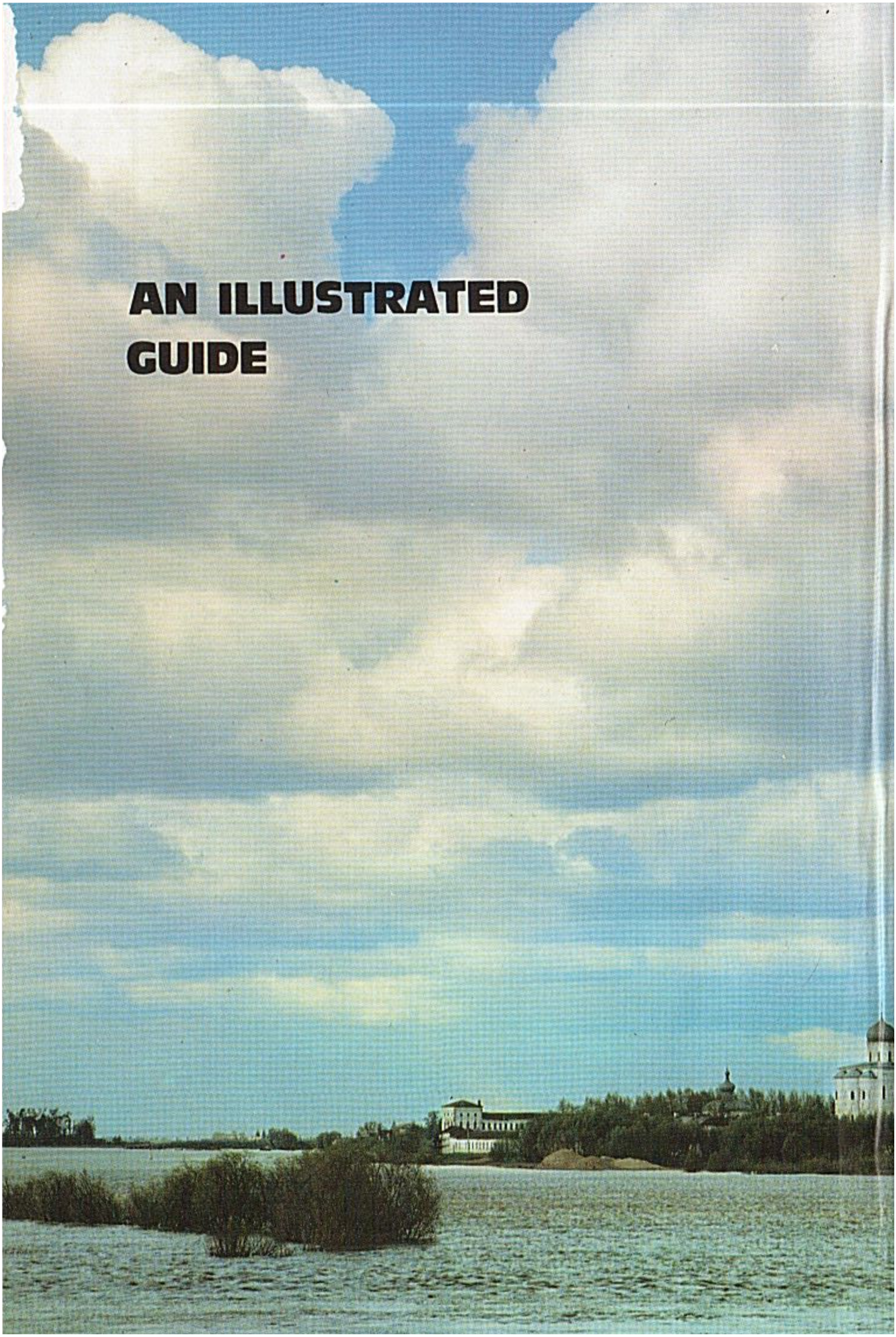
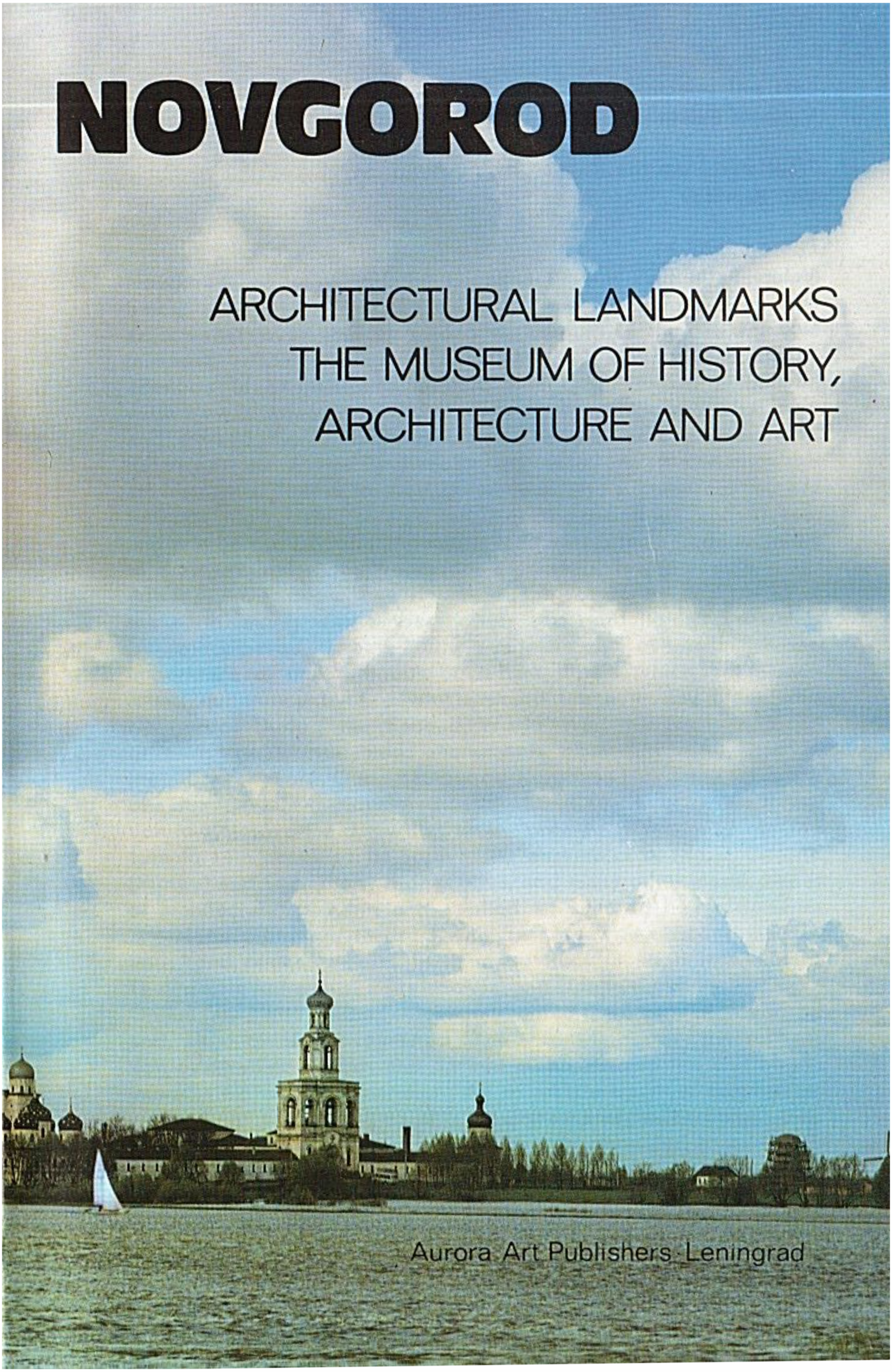


AN ILLUSTRATED GUIDE



NOVGOROD

ARCHITECTURAL LANDMARKS
THE MUSEUM OF HISTORY, ARCHITECTURE AND ART



Aurora Art Publishers · Leningrad

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Novgorod, or Novgorod the Great, as it was called in the old times, is a veritable treasury of architecture, painting and applied art created over the 11th to 17th centuries. The history and immense artistic heritage of the city have long attracted the attention of experts and laymen. Novgorod is also associated with many outstanding Russian writers and composers who lived and worked there. This museum-city reveals more and more of its riches to Soviet archaeologists, restorers, historians, and art historians. Thanks to their determined effort, numerous ancient frescoes have been cleared of later overpaintings and stucco, and a large number of architectural monuments have been restored to their original state. Workshops of potters, jewellers and other artisans have been unearthed in the centuries-old strata of the earth, along with timber houses and outbuildings separated by block-paved streets. One can hardly overestimate the importance of multitudinous birch-bark letters which have been found quite recently and which record the everyday life of old Novgorod. During the Second World War the Nazis reduced to ruins the world-famous monuments of architecture, such as the Church of Our Saviour-on-Nereditsa-Hill, the Church of Our Saviour-in-Kovaliovo and the Church of the Dormition-in-Volotovo-Field, with their precious frescoes of the 12th to 14th centuries. St Sophia, the ensembles of the St George (Yuriev) and St Anthony Monasteries, and many other masterpieces of architecture, painting and applied art suffered heavy damage. The Nazis disfigured the surviving frescoes with obscene inscriptions, and punched holes in them for flues of small iron stoves. They destroyed almost all residential and public buildings.

On January 20, 1944, the Soviet Army routed the enemy at Novgorod and, although it still remained in the front-line area, the restoration of dwelling houses and ancient monuments in the city began immediately after its liberation. An extraordinary state commission was set up to investigate the Nazi atrocities. According to its findings, the damage sustained by the city amounted to over one milliard roubles. Following the decision of the Soviet Government, large sums of money were allocated to the restoration and conservation of architectural landmarks and frescoes (74 of 77 monuments required extensive restoration). To this end, a special restoration workshop began to function in Novgorod.

In the city, virtually resurrected from the ashes, the past and the present are a harmonious whole. The memory of the past is preserved not only in architecture, painting, and hundreds of museum exhibits. It is immortalized in the names of old and new streets commemorating the heroes of the Revolution and the Great Patriotic War of 1941—45. It also lives on in the streets named after great Russian writers, poets and musicians, above all Alexander Radishchev, Alexander Pushkin, Mikhail Lermontov, Alexander Herzen, and Sergei Rakhmaninov. There are quite a few monuments extolling the courage of Soviet soldiers and partisans who fought in Novgorod and its suburbs during the war.

Novgorod in Russian means a 'new town' This is exactly what the Novgorod of today is: razed to the ground during the war, it has virtually risen from the ashes before the eyes of the postwar generation. The city has expanded far beyond its former limits. It is an important industrial and cultural centre, located on the busy highway linking Moscow and Leningrad. Its population totals over 200,000. Its art treasures, lovingly preserved by the state, captivate, as ever, with a noble beauty, which reflects the soul of the great people that has created it.

The first records of the city on the Volkhov River date back to the year 859, the story of its emergence being shrouded in the mist of legend.

Two brothers, Slovena and Rus, having settled by the sources of the river Mutnaya, which flowed from Lake Moisko, founded a town, Slovensk. They gave the name of Slovena's daughter, Ilmen, to the lake, and his son's name, Volkhov, to the river.

With the passage of time the town became deserted and fell into oblivion. However, legends of the land of their ancestors continued to circulate among the Slavs. Many years had elapsed before they reinhabited the country around Ilmen Lake. They built their main town not on the site of Slovensk but a little further upstream the Volkhov, hence the name 'Novgorod', that is, a new town.

Archaeological investigations have confirmed the relatively late origin of the city: no layers dating to times prior to the 10th century have been found in its territory. Meanwhile, artefacts of the 9th century have been unearthed on the site of the famous Rurik Fortress (Rurik Gorodishche), situated within three kilometres of Novgorod, close by the shore of Ilmen Lake. It is also possible that the Slavs named their new town 'Novgorod' in the desire to stress the difference between it and the old Gorodishche.

In the old times, Novgorod served as the northern base of the celebrated trade route "from the Varangians to the Greeks", notably from Scandinavia and Western Europe to Byzantium, and also as a centre of trade with the East by means of the Volga River. Its advantageous geographical location was one of the factors which secured Novgorod a position of prime importance at the early stages of Russian history.

From the very beginning Novgorod lay on both banks of the Volkhov River: the left, or the St Sophia Side, named after St Sophia, and the right, or the Market Side, deriving its name from the city's main market. As today, the two sides were linked by a bridge.

Novgorod is a city where one can easily find one's way. The centre of the St Sophia Side is the Detinets, the citadel of the old city. Converging on Victory Square (St Sophia Square), which adjoins the Detinets on the west, are the main streets planned according to the radial-circular principle. In the Market Side, some streets run toward the river while others are laid parallel to it. Such geometrically balanced pattern indicates that the network of streets was formed in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The limits of ancient Novgorod, which sprawled around the Detinets and was accordingly called the Outside town, are easily traceable thanks to the surviving ramparts and moat that served as the second line of defense (the first line was comprised of the Detinets fortifications). Today, remnants of the earthenwork rampart of the Outside town are in different places intersected by modern roads.

Any account of Russian history and culture, especially of the 10th—16th centuries, would be unthinkable without Novgorod. Long before St Petersburg, Novgorod had become a "window onto Europe". Located at the crossing point of trading routes linking East and West, it had extensive commercial contacts with northern German towns, Scandinavia, France, Italy, the Byzantine Empire, and oriental countries. Its main exports were furs, honey, tallow, fish, leather and handicraft articles. All this brought Novgorod a great fame and wealth. It is not surprising, therefore, that during its flourishing period the city was called Lord Novgorod the Great.

At a very early date the city attained a special position within the Kievan state. In 1014 Prince Yaroslav Vladimirovich refused to pay tribute to Prince Vladimir of Kiev, thereby creating conditions for Novgorod's gradual transformation into an independent political entity. During the 12th and 13th centuries the city finally separated from Kiev and became the capital of a feudal republic whose territory extended from the Baltic to the White Sea and from the Urals to the Grand Principality of Lithuania. All this immense territory belonged to Novgorod until 1478.

Novgorod's contribution to the development of Russian culture is outstanding. This is especially true of its architecture, painting and applied art of the 11th — early 13th centuries. No other city excels Novgorod in the number of ancient monuments of architecture. Most of the icons and murals extant today are of Novgorodian origin. The Ostromir Lectionary, written and illuminated for the Novgorod governor Ostromir in 1056—57, is the oldest of all Russian books. Novgorod chronicles are not only literary works in their own right but also valuable annals of Novgorodian and all-Russian history.

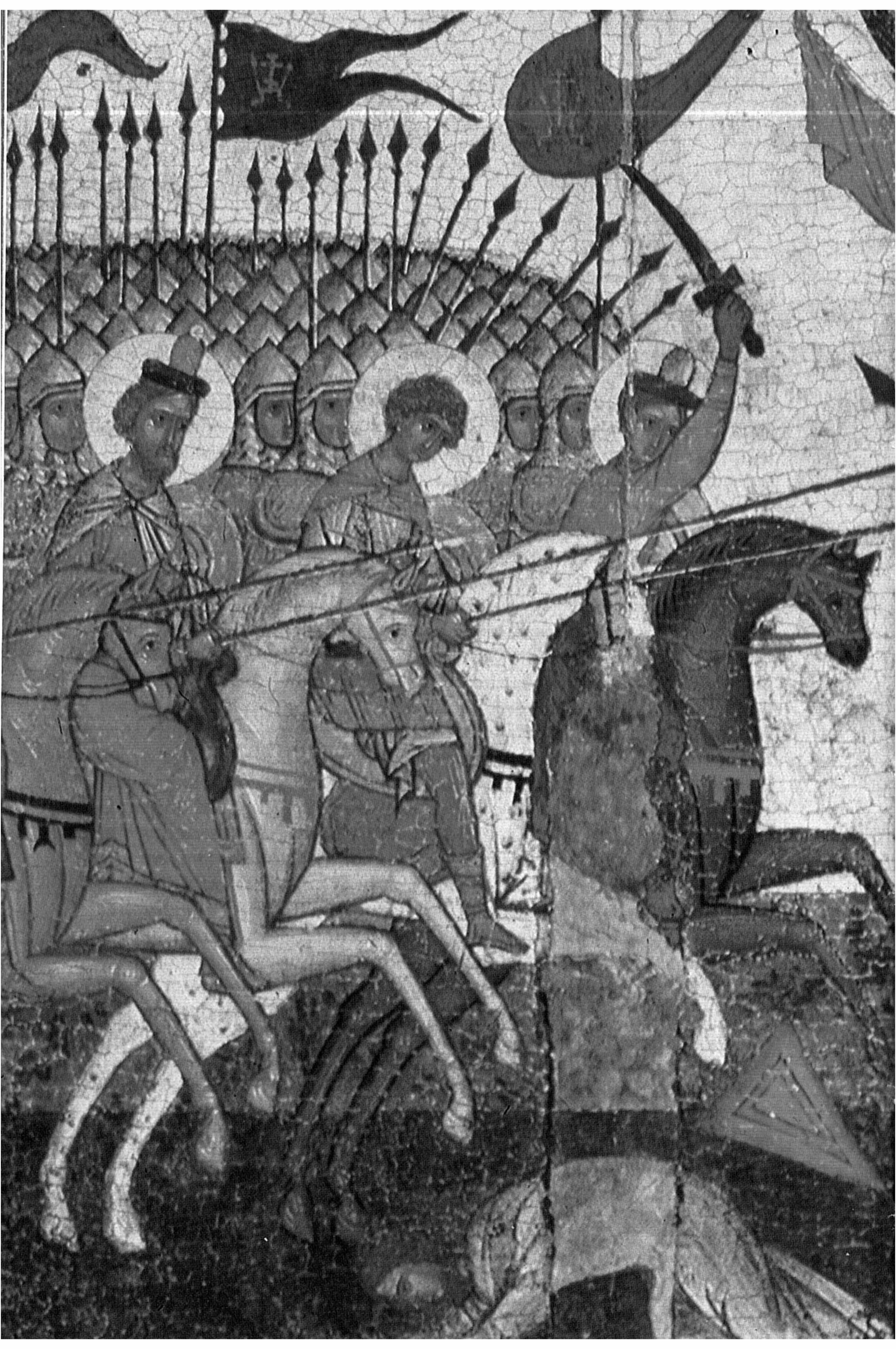
In the 1950s archaeologists made the sensational discovery of birch-bark letters — pieces of birch bark with texts or drawings scratched on them. These unique written sources attest to the very high level of education in Novgorodian society. By means of such letters, most of the townsfolk corresponded with one another. Towards the early 13th century the distinctive idiom of Novgorodian art had come into its own. It was distinguished by economy of form, rationality, clarity and that striking power of execution which allowed Igor Grabar, a prominent artist and art historian, to dub the Novgorodian's aesthetic ideal the "beauty of power".

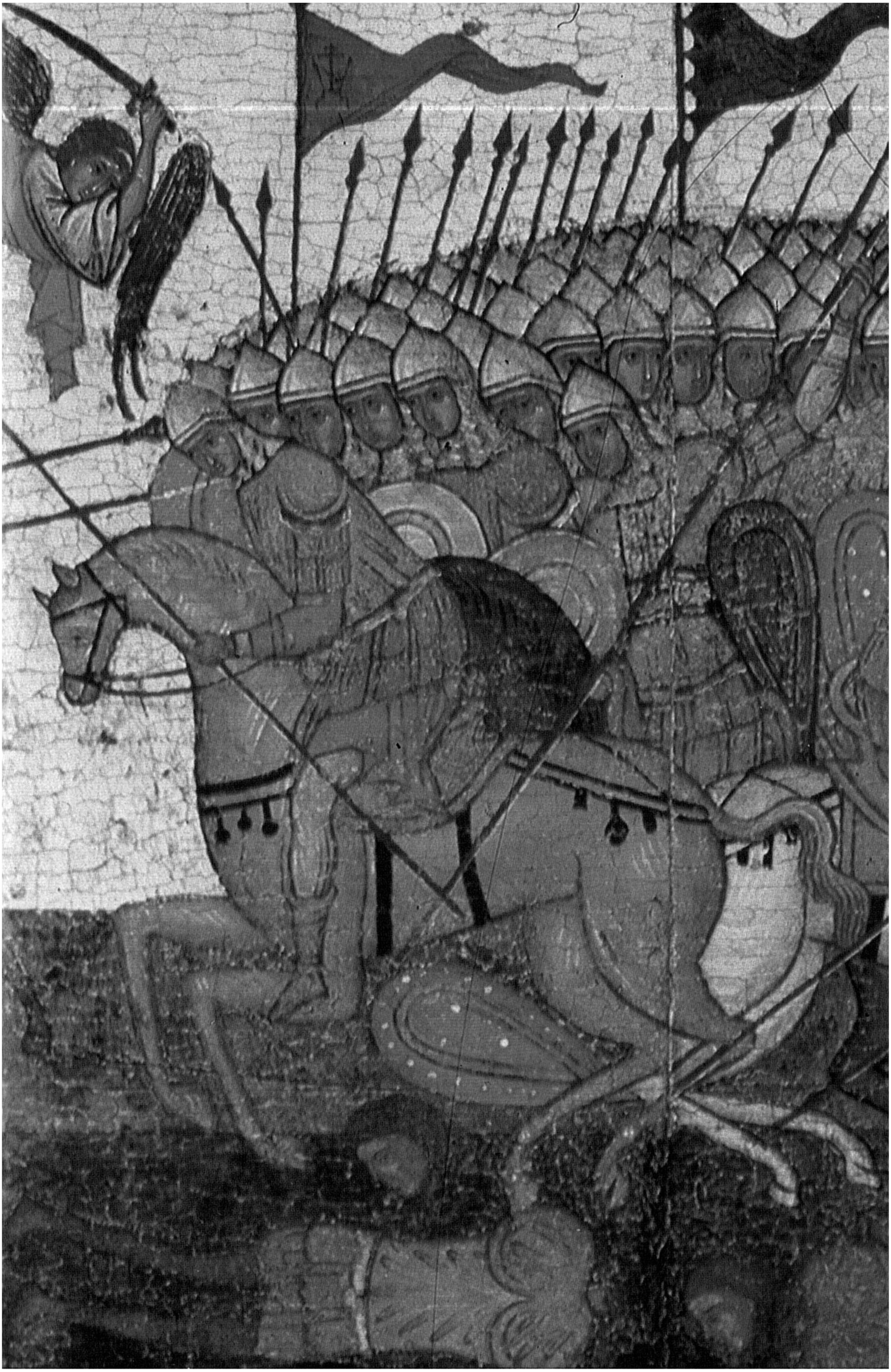
During the period of the Mongol-Tartar domination (13th—15th centuries) Novgorod was spared the tragic fate of the towns in north-eastern and south-western Russia — it had the good fortune to escape Mongol devastation and all humiliations of defeat. However, the tragedy common to all Russian lands affected every sphere of its social and public life in the second half of the 13th and early 14th centuries. Even though the Mongol-Tartar invasion failed to reach Novgorod, the city had to deal with major assaults on Russia from the West. In 1240 Prince Alexander of Novgorod led the Novgorodians to a smashing victory over the Swedes on the banks of the Neva (hence his name Alexander Nevsky), and in 1242 he put to rout the Teutonic Knights on the ice of Lake Chud, or Peipus. The battle is known in Russian history as the "massacre on the ice".

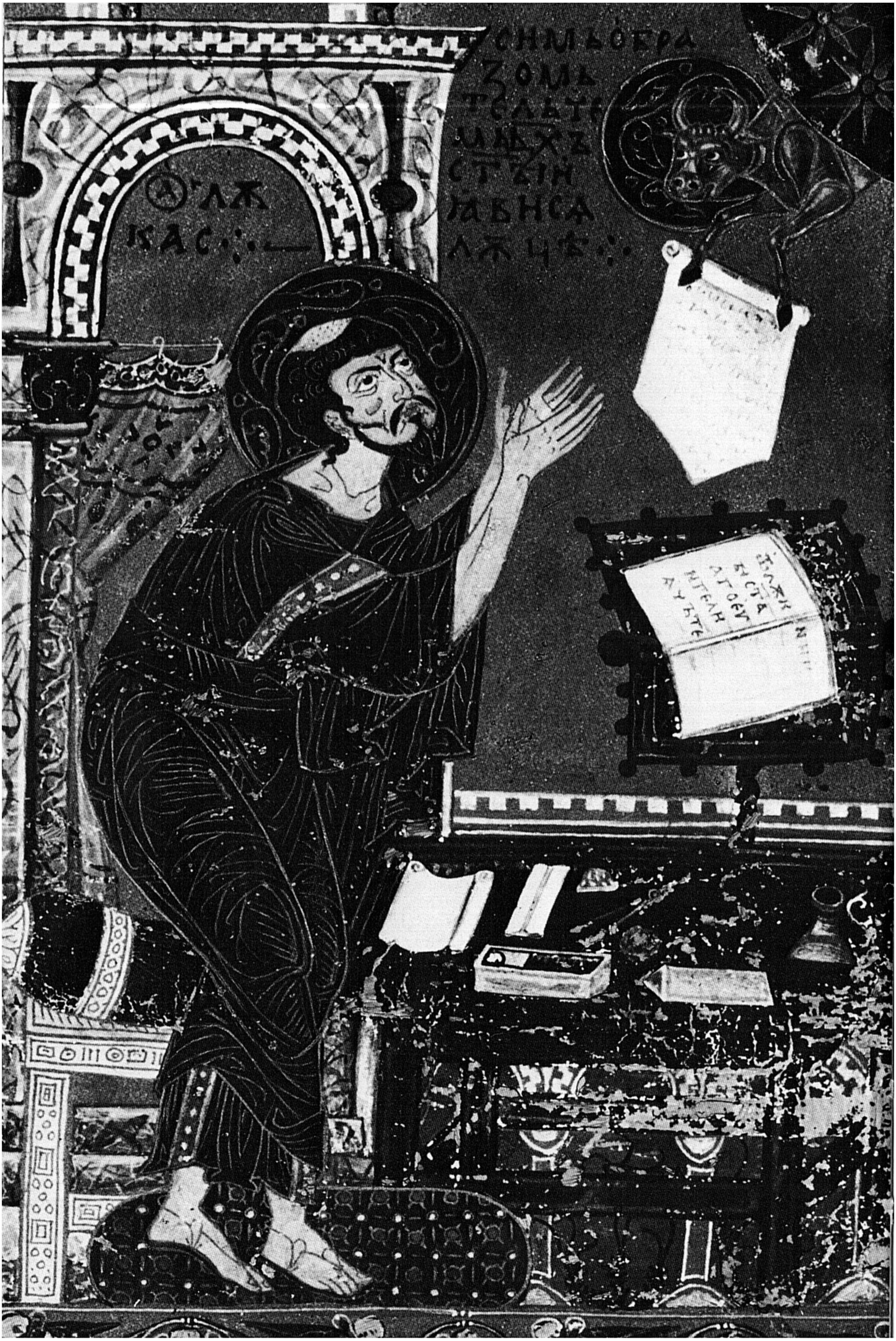
The 14th and 15th centuries were a period of flourishing in the history of Novgorod, its culture and art.

In 1478 under Prince Ivan III of Moscow, Novgorodian lands were incorporated into an integral centralized Russian state. During the 16th and 17th centuries the city no longer played any role of importance and its art eventually lost its distinctive idiom. In the 18th and 19th centuries Novgorod turned into a backwater of the Russian Empire, its ancient stone buildings fast falling into ruins. True, the 1778 replanning of the city, having cleared up the mess of medieval construction, helped bring into full view many architectural monuments which were assigned the role of compositional centrepieces in the new network of streets.

Following the victorious October Revolution of 1917, the precious monuments of Novgorodian architecture and painting were placed in the custody of the state. Of unfading artistic value, they continue to command the attention of students and lovers of Russian culture and art.



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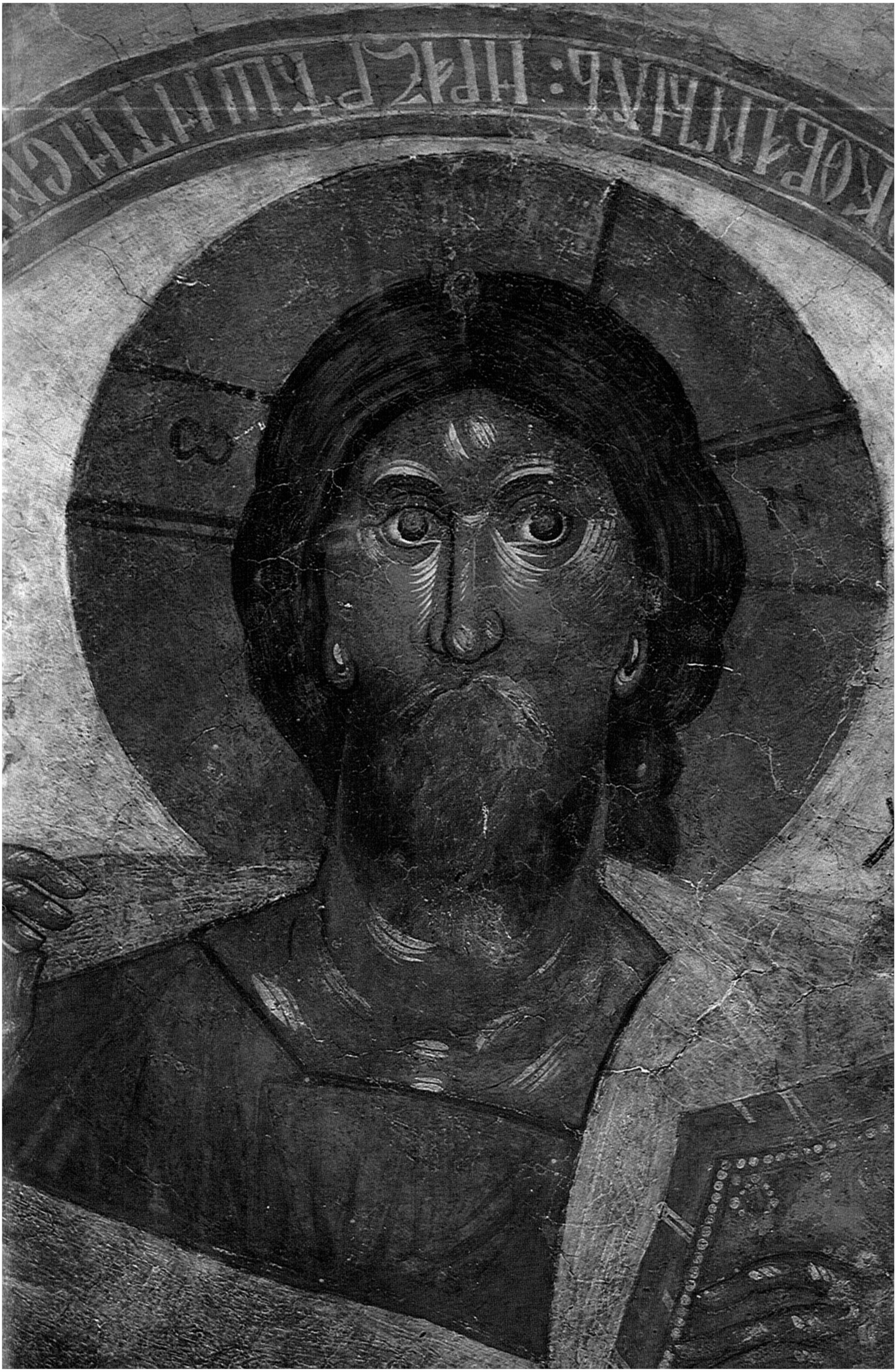
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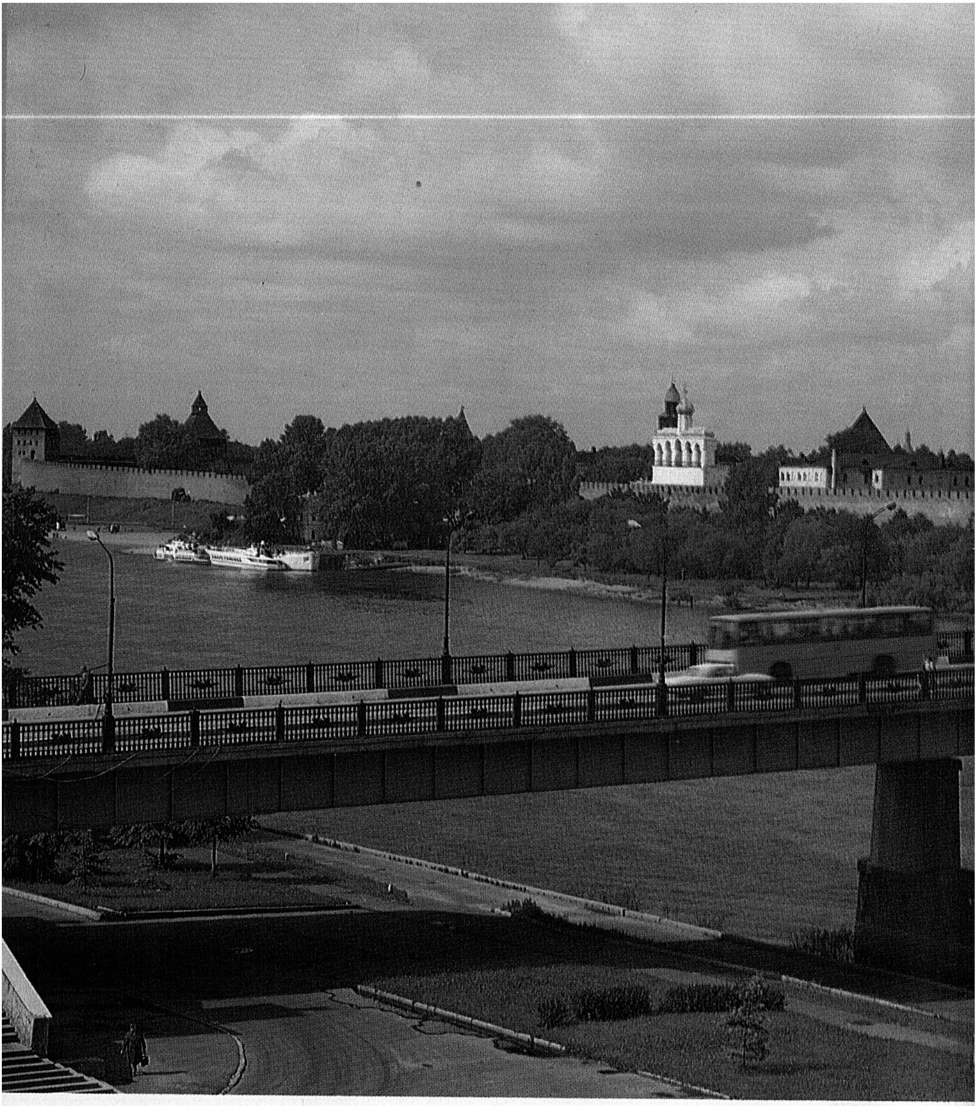

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1

The Battle between the Men of Suzdal and the Novgorodians.
Icon. Detail. 15th century
Novgorod Museum of History,
Architecture and Art

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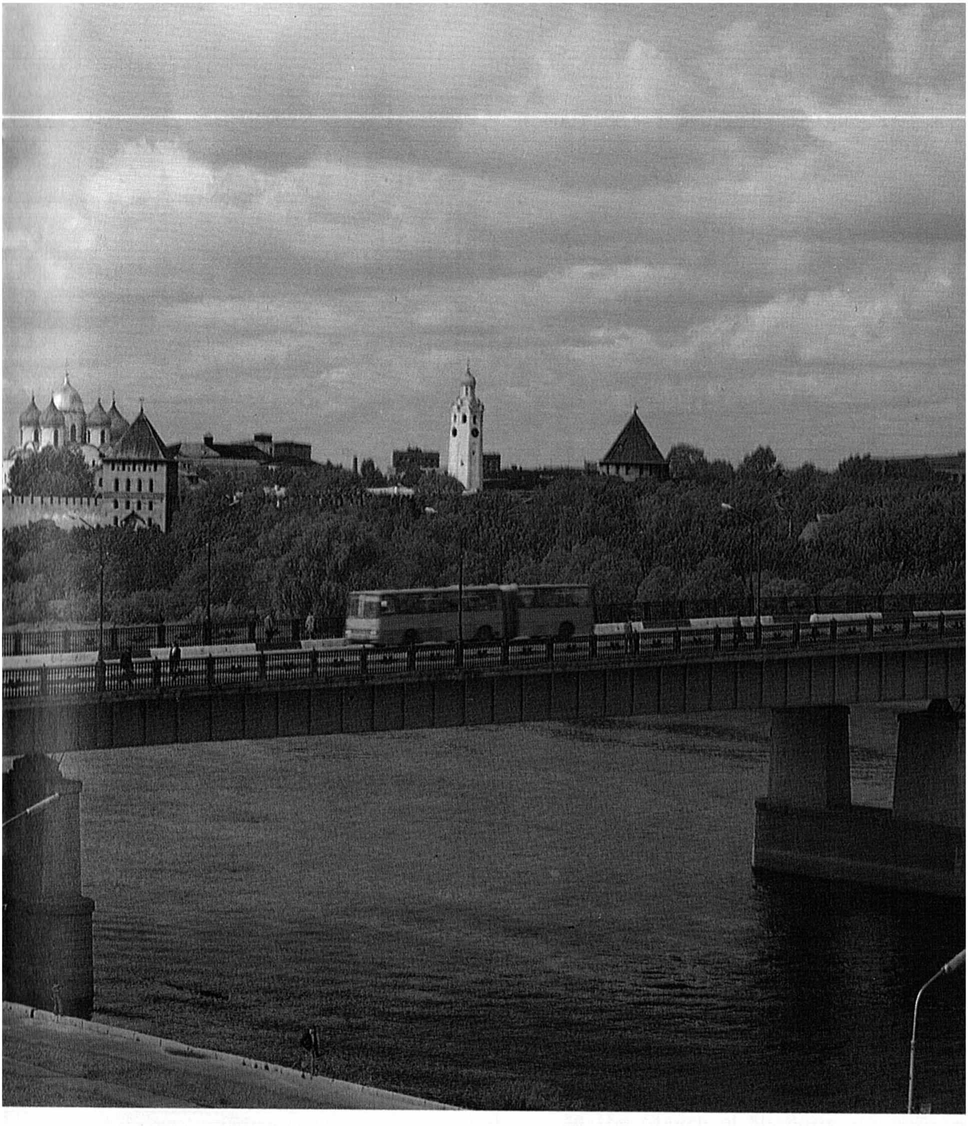
2

The Evangelist Luke.
Miniature from the Ostromir
Lectionary. 1056—57
Saltykov-Shcedrin Public
Library, Leningrad



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3

The Church of Our Saviour of the Transfiguration-in-Elijah-Street. *The Pantocrator.* Fresco by Theophanes the Greek. 1379

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4

The Volkhov River in Flood. In the distance, on the right, the Church of Our Saviour-on-Nereditsa-Hill

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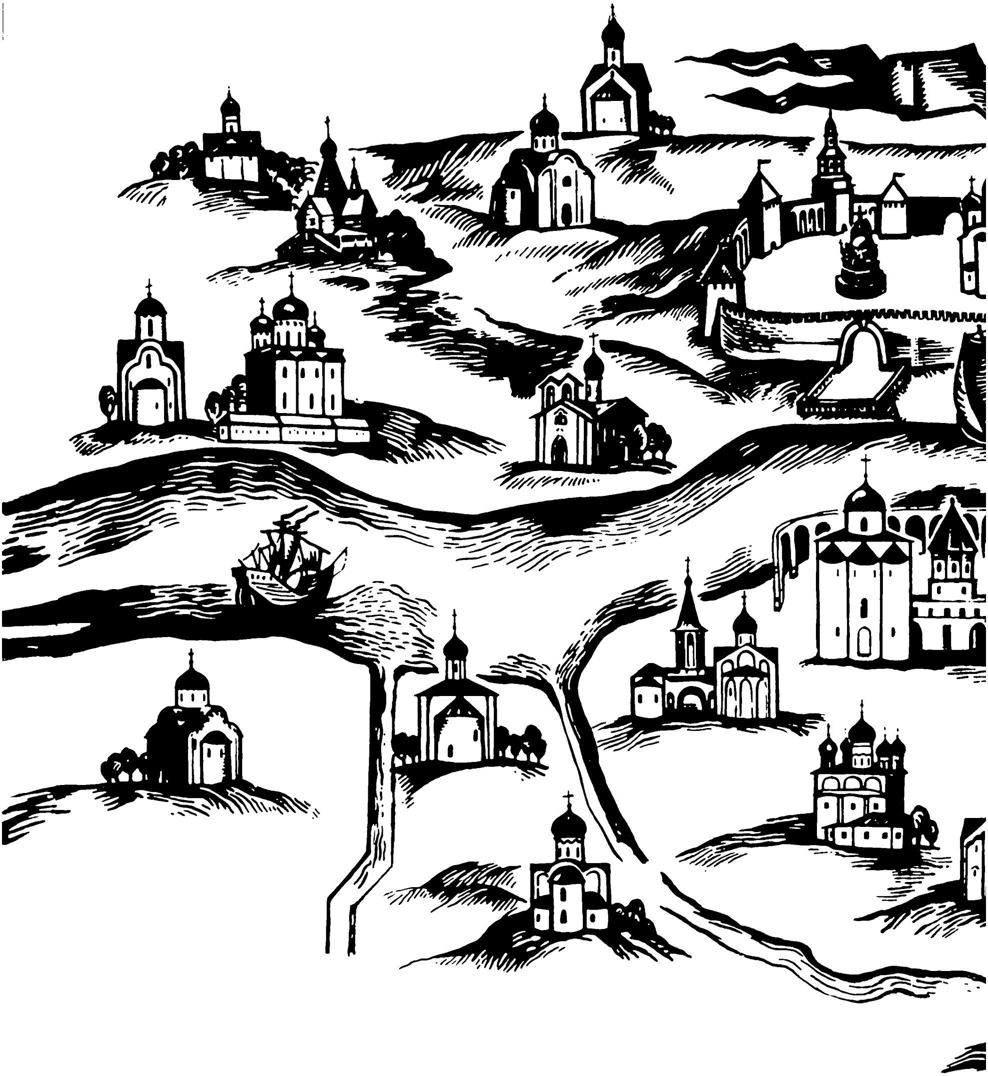
5

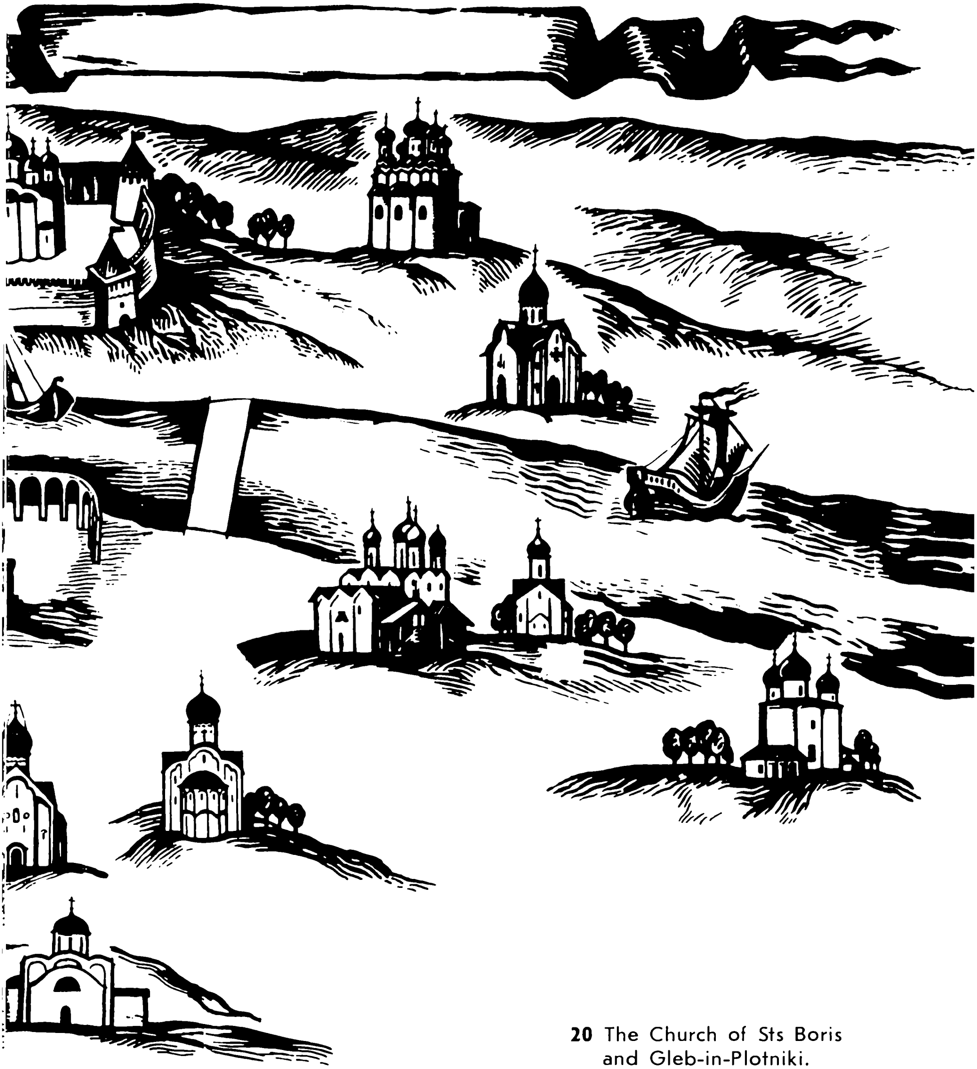
the St Sophia Side

6

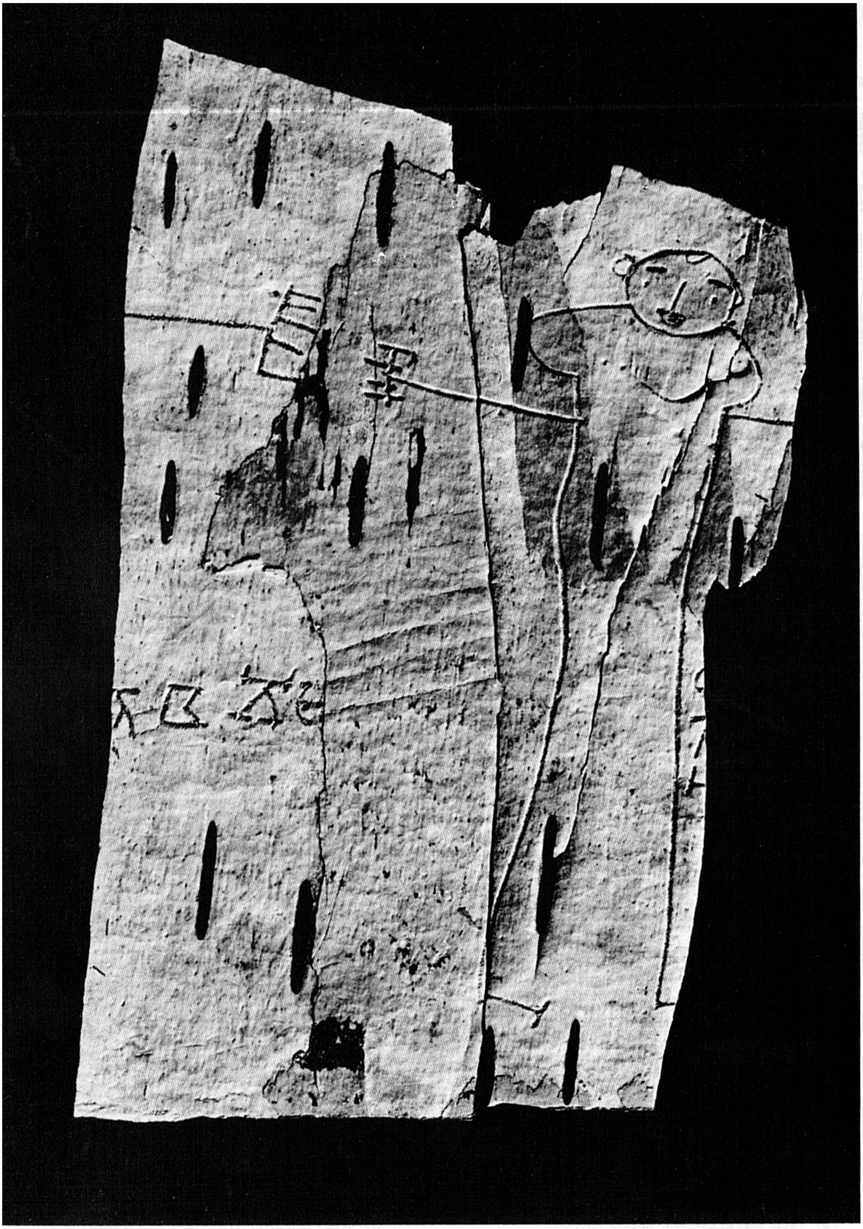
The Detinets



1 Detinets.
2 St Sophia's.
3 The Millennium of Russia Memorial.
4 The Church of the Twelve Apostles.
5 The Church of St Blaise.
6 The Church of St John the Almsgiver.
7 The Cathedral of St George.
8 The Church of the Nativity of Our Lady-at-Peryn.
9 The Church of the Annunciation-at-Arkazhi.
10 The *"Vitoslavitsy"* Open-Air Museum of Wooden Architecture.
11 The Church of Sts Peter and Paul-in-Kozhevniki.
12 The Trinity Church of the Monastery of the Holy Spirit.
13 The Cathedral of St Nicholas.



14 The Arcade of the Gostiny Dvor.
15 The Gate-tower of the Gostiny Dvor.
16 The Church of Our Saviour-in-Elijah-Street.
17 The Cathedral of Our Lady of the Sign.
18 The Church of St Theodor Stratelates-on-the-Stream.
19 Ensemble of the churches of the Annunciation and of St Michael the Archangel.
20 The Church of Sts Boris and Gleb-in-Plotniki.
21 The Church of St John the Divine-on-the-Vitka.
22 The Church of the Nativity of the Virgin in the St Anthony Monastery.
23 The Church of Our Saviour-in-Kovaliovo.
24 The Church of Our Saviour-on-Nereditsa-Hill.
25 The Rurik-Fortress.
26 The Church of St Nicholas of Lipna.

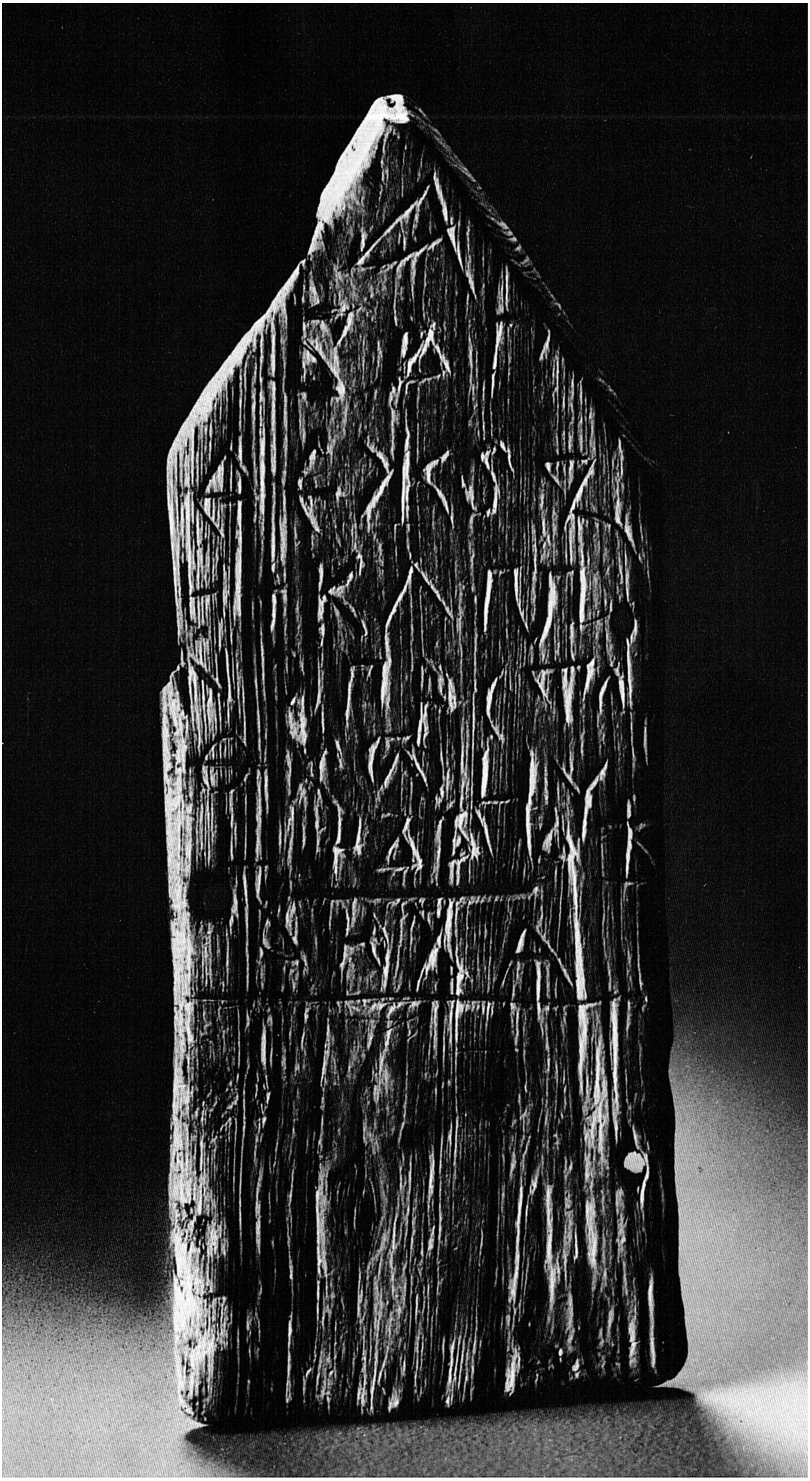


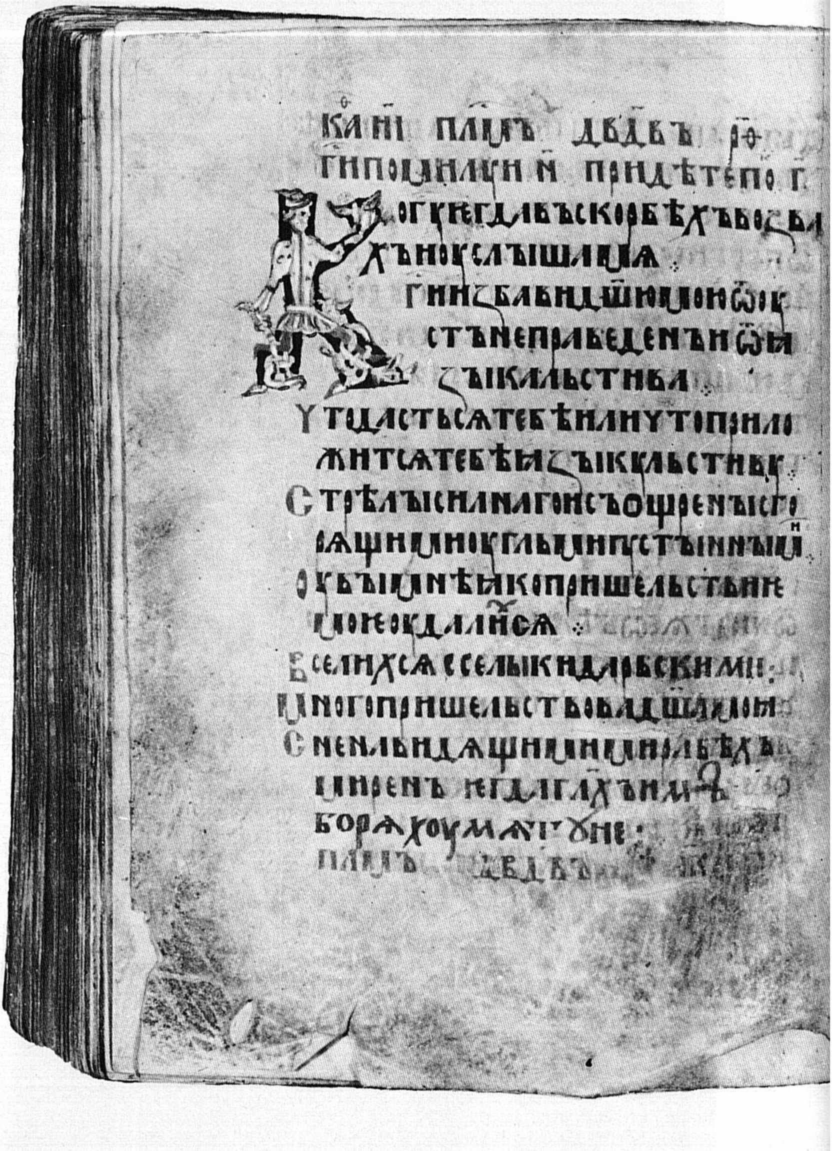
7

Birch-bark letter with a drawing by the boy Onphim.
13th century. Novgorod Museum of History, Architecture and Art

8

Plank with ABC. Late 13th—early 14th century
Novgorod Museum of History, Architecture and Art





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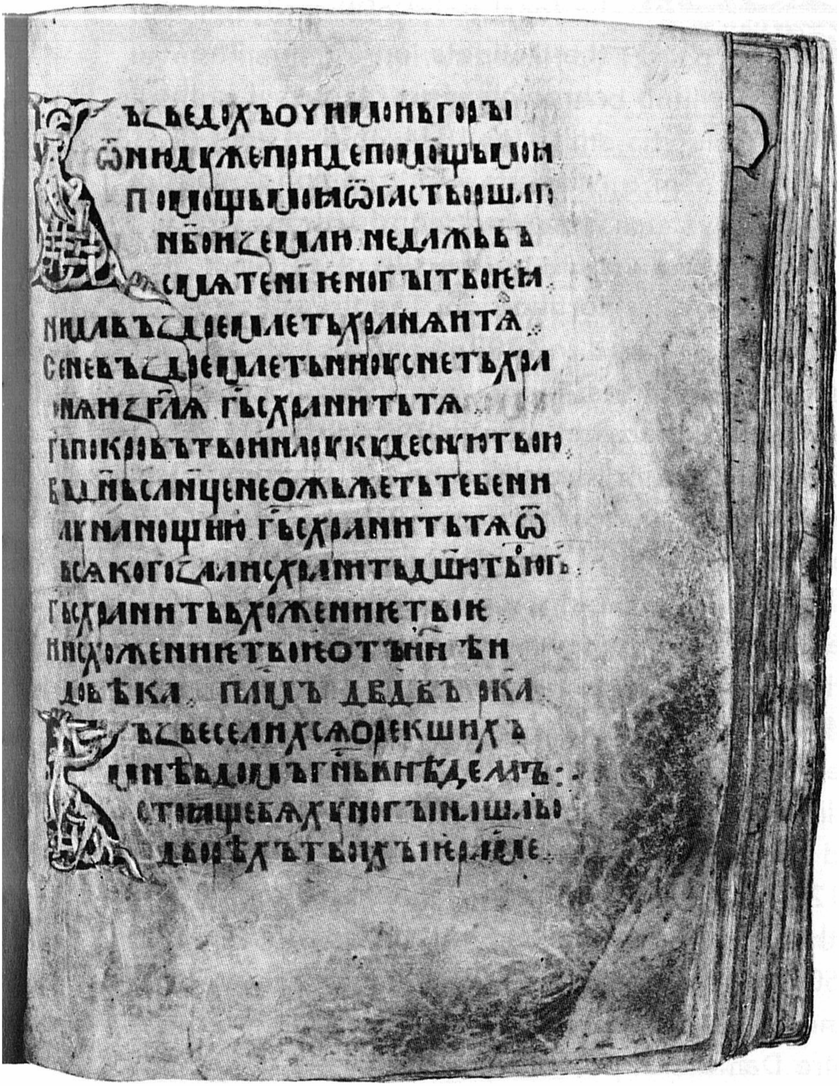
Spread with initials
K and *B* from the Psalter.
Novgorod, 14th century
Saltykov-Shchedrin Public
Library, Leningrad



ЪЗВЕДОХЪОУЧИМОИВЪГОРЫ
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ПОМОЩЬМОꙖѾГ҃АСТВОРШАГО
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СМѦТЕНИЕНОГЫТВОЕꙖ
НИДАВЪЗДРЕМЛЕТЬХРАНѦИТѦ.
СЕНЕВЪЗДРЕМЛЕТЬНИОУСНЕТЬХРА
НѦИИ҃ЗЛѦ.Г҃ЬСХРАНИТЬТѦ.
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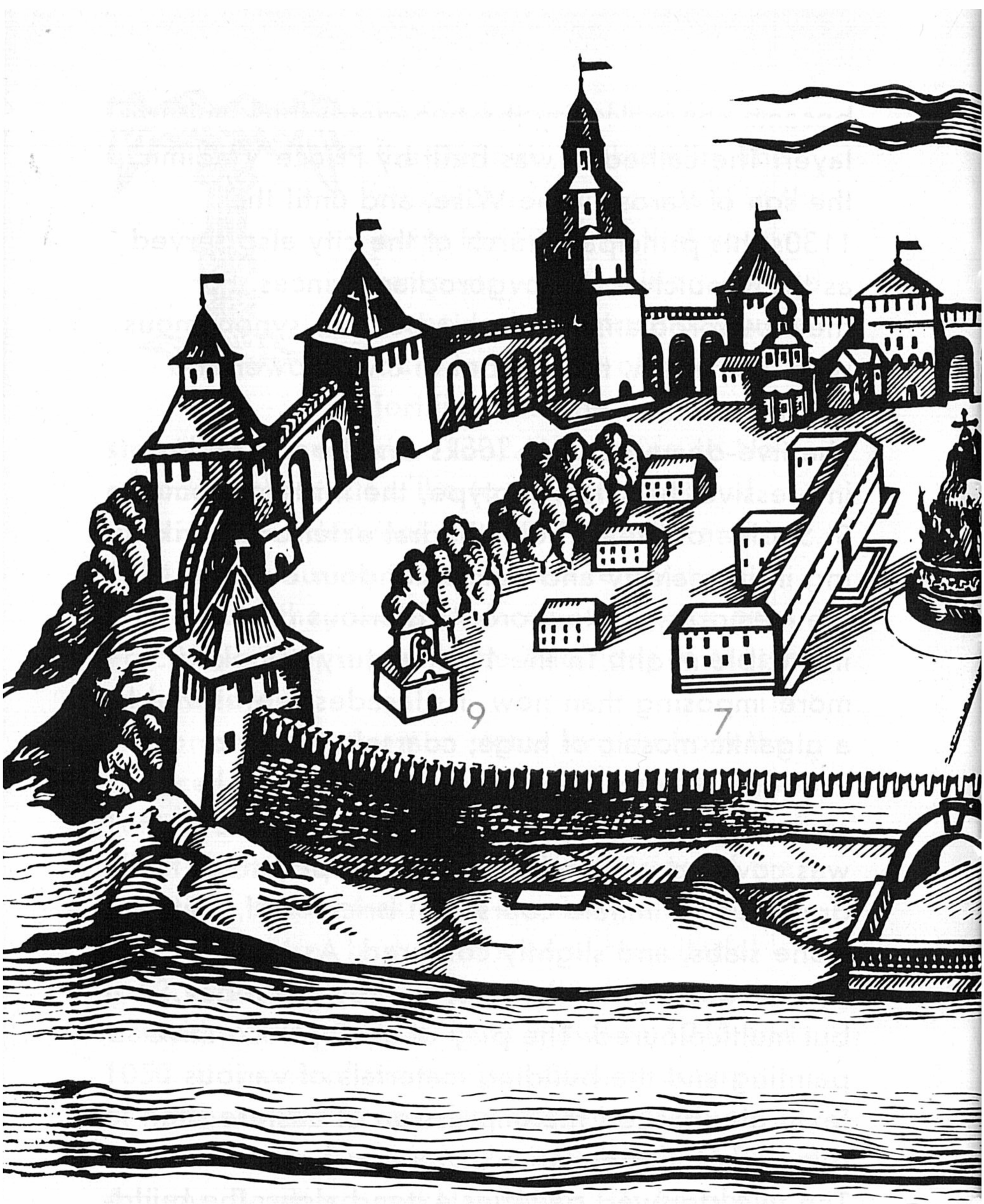
ЛУНАНОЩИЮ.Г҃ЬСХРАНИТЬТѦѾ
ВСѦКОГОЗЛАИСХРАНИТЬД҃ШЮТВОЮГЬ:
Г҃ЬСХРАНИТЬВХОЖЕНИЕТВОЕ
ИИСХОЖЕНИЕТВОЕОТЪНЫНѢИ
ДОВѢКА. ПЛЦЪ ДВДВЪ РКА
ЪЗВЕСЕЛИХСѦОРЕКШИХЪ
МНѢВЪДОМЪГ҃НЬИДЕМЪ:
СТОѦЩЕБѦХУНОГЫНАШАВО
ДВОРѢХЪТВОИХЪИЕРЛМЕ.

The focal point of the city is the Detinets, or kremlin. The chronicler first records it in the entry for 1044. In that year, ramparts with traditional wood framework constructions were built on the site of an elder fortification. The first stone structures appeared in 1302. According to Novgorodian chronicles, the towers and walls of the citadel underwent repeated repairs, and in 1484 — 90, during the all-round renovation of the fortress they were replaced with brick ones, erected in keeping with the traditions of Moscow architecture.

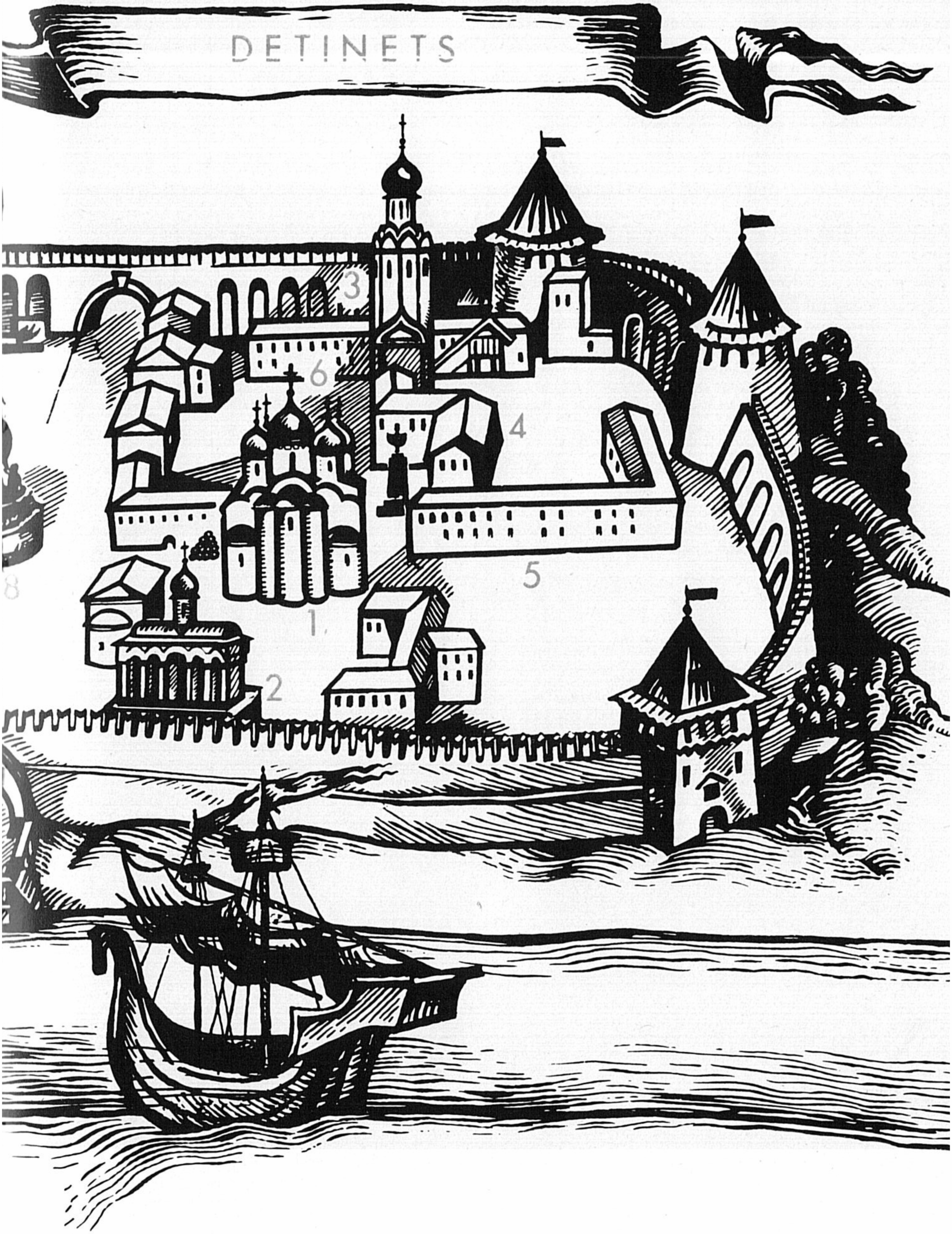
The present-day kremlin stems largely from the 15th century, for several alterations made in the 16th and 17th centuries were minor and did not affect its appearance. The total extension of the walls is 1,385 metres, they are 3.3 metres thick and 10.9 metres high. The area of the citadel is 12.1 hectares. Inside the Detinets towers the Cathedral of St Sophia, built between 1045 and 1050. It is one of the earliest stone structures of northern Russia, a senior contemporary of Notre Dame in Paris, and the cathedrals of Rheims, Amiens, Bamberg and Naumburg. Its height is 38 m. Originally it was taller, for during the past nine centuries the lower part of the building became concealed by the two-metre thick cultural layer. The cathedral was built by Prince Vladimir, the son of Yaroslav the Wise, and until the 1130s this principal church of the city also served as the sepulchre of Novgorodian princes. For the Novgorodians, St Sophia became synonymous with their town, the symbol of civic power and independence.

The five-domed church looks simpler but no less impressive than its prototype, the thirteen-domed St Sophia of Kiev. The cathedral exterior is striking in its majesty and epic splendour evoking the memories of Novgorod's glorious past and invincible might. In the 11th century it looked more imposing than now. Its façades represented a gigantic mosaic of huge, coarsely trimmed irregular slabs of flagstone and shell rock. In some places (particularly on the apses), the wall was covered with mortar, smoothly polished, drawn up to imitate courses of brick or of white-stone slabs, and slightly coloured. As a result, the façades were not white, as they are today, but multicoloured. The play of stone, decorative painting and the building materials of various texture enhanced the impression of austere simplicity and introduced a picturesque effect.

The two-storeyed galleries extend along the building's southern, western and northern sides, with a stair-tower constructed at the north-eastern



1 St Sophia's.
2 St Sophia's Bell-tower.
3 Belfry.
4 The Palace of Facets.
5 St Nicetas's Building.
6 The Lycud wing.
7 The Building of *Gubernia* Administrative Bodies.
8 The Millennium of Russia Memorial.
9 The Church of St Andrew Stratelates.


DETINETS
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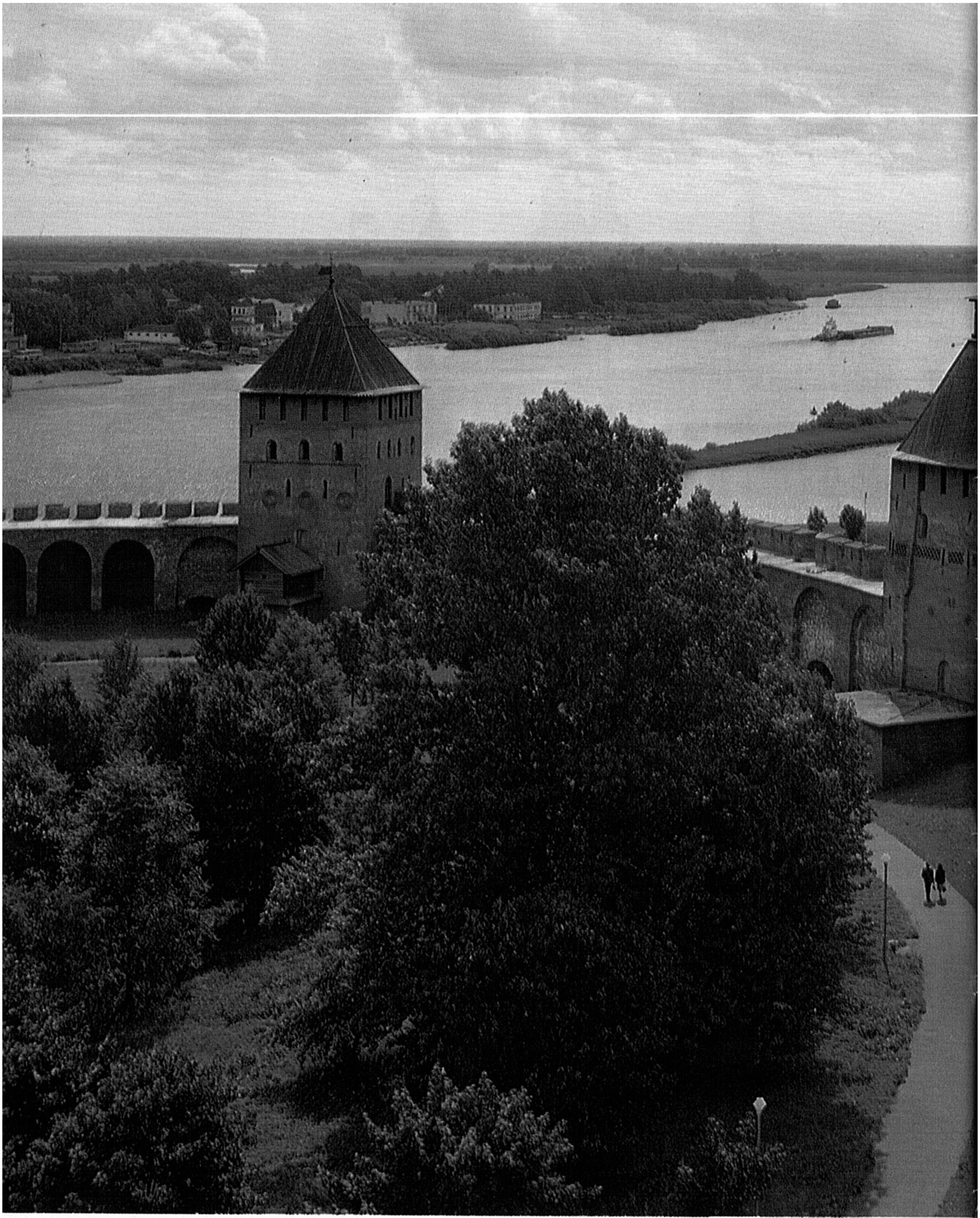

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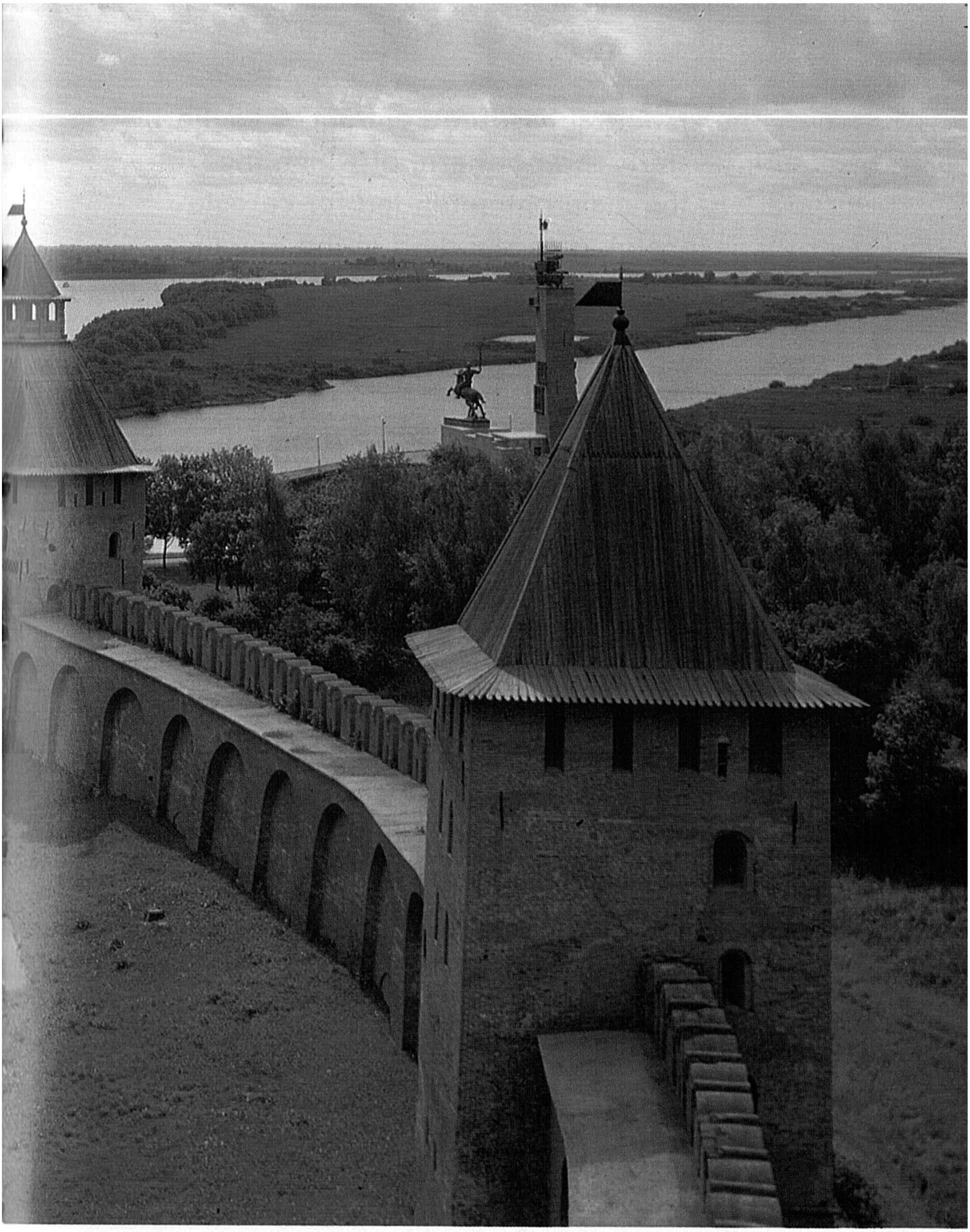
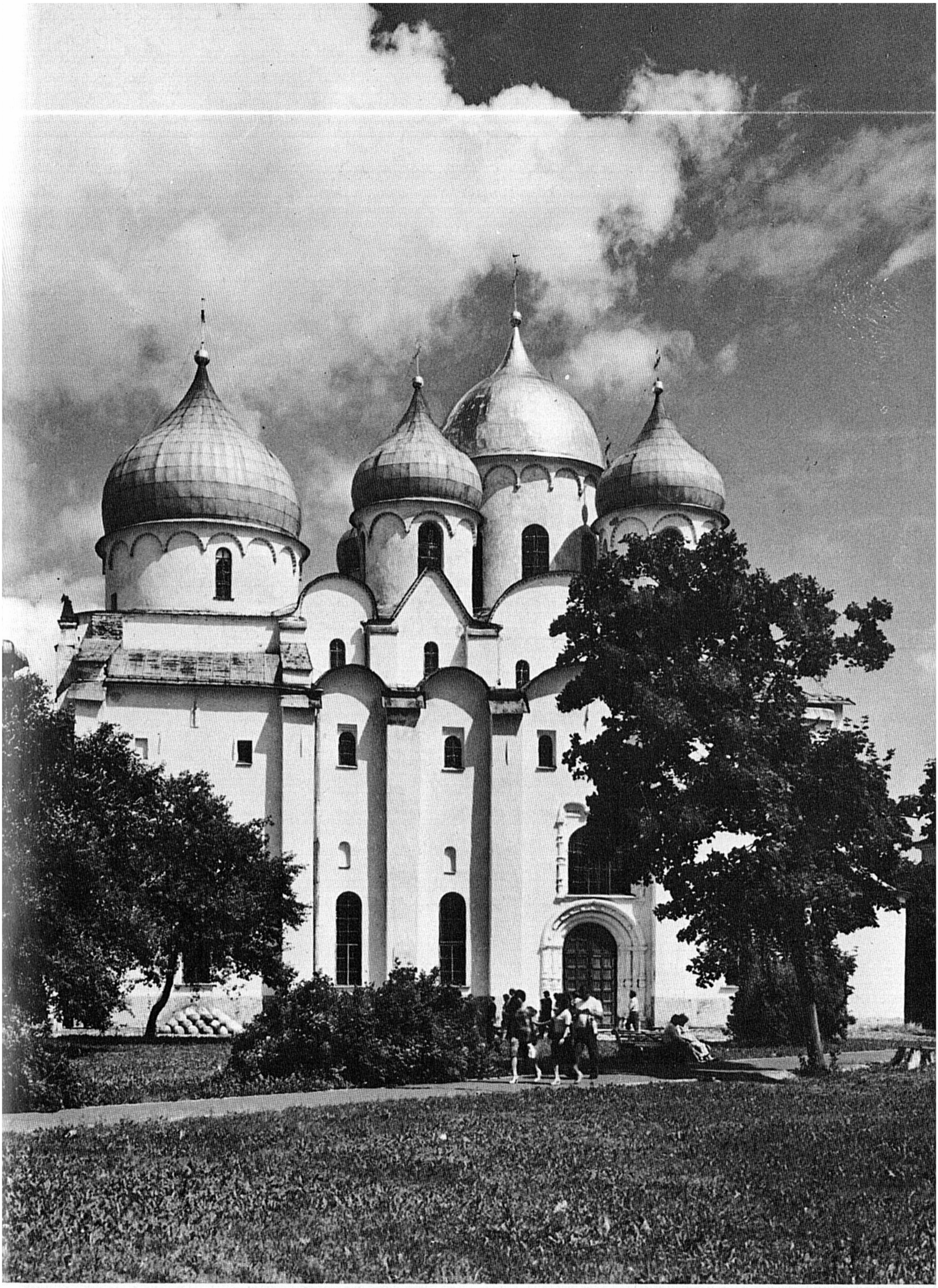
Novgorod.
View toward River Volkhov



corner. The cathedral has three entrances — the southern, western and northern, of which the western was the main one intended for ceremonial processions. A gate standing at the entrance is known as the Sigtuna Gate (mid-12th century); according to legend, it was brought from the Swedish town of Sigtuna in 1187. The second name of the gate derives from the town of Magdeburg, where it was made. The two leaves are decorated with biblical and evangelical scenes in cast bronze relief. In the lower left corner are portraits of the craftsmen who created this superb specimen of medieval Western European bronzework. An inscription in Latin gives their names, Riquin and Weissmut. The small central figure — judging from an inscription in Slavonic — is a representation of the Russian master craftsman Avraam, who assembled the gate.

There is yet another bronze gate in the cathedral, called the Korsun Gate. Made in the 11th century in Chersonesos, Byzantium, it leads from the southern gallery into the Nativity side-chapel. Legend has it that the gate was handed over to Novgorod as a gift of Prince Yaroslav the Wise (c. 978—1054).

The cathedral's interior is as majestic as its exterior. It is divided by huge piers into five aisles, three of which end in altar apses. In the south-western corner, inside the tower, is a wide spiral



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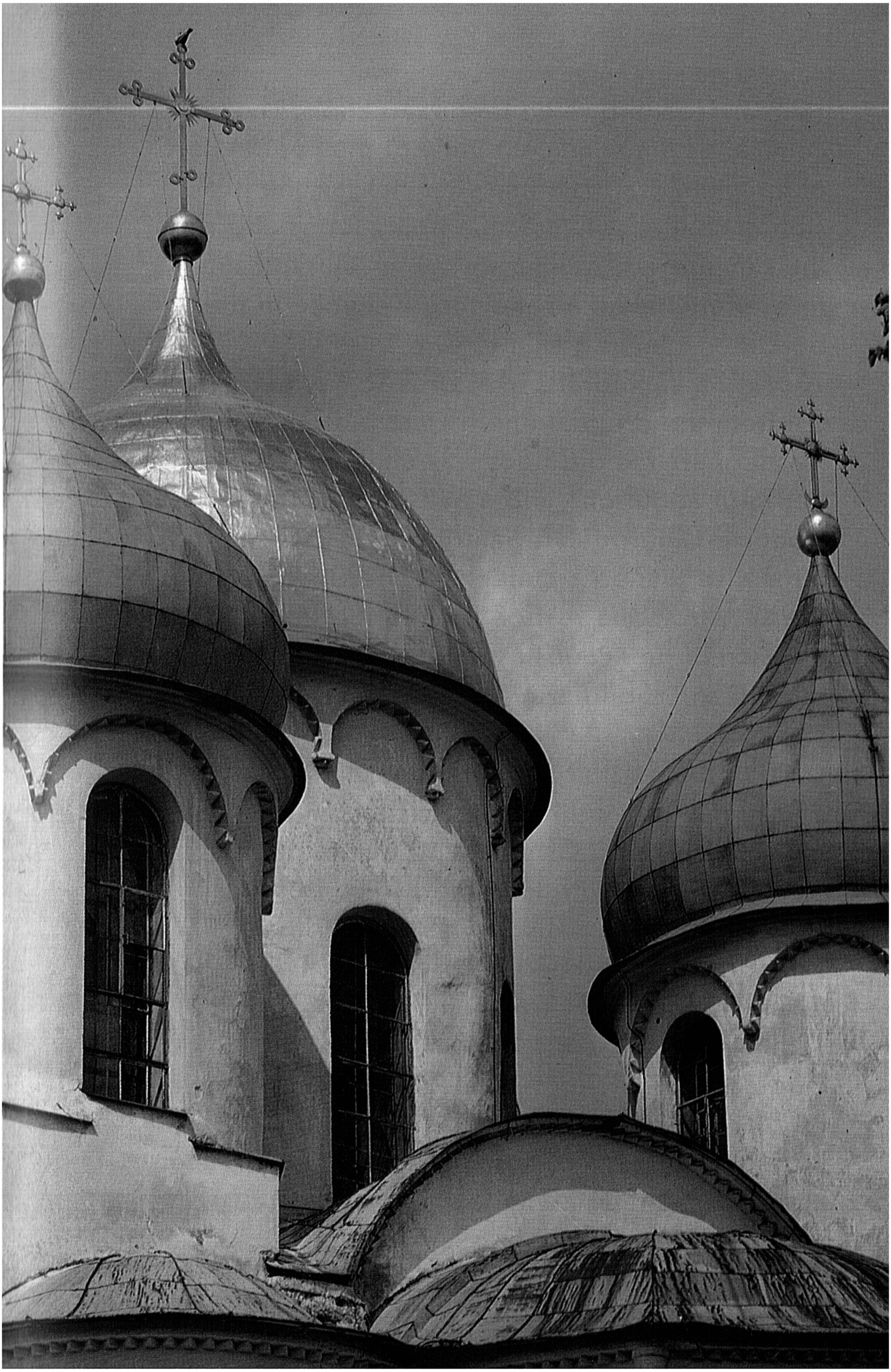
11

St Sophia's. 1045—50

12

St Sophia's. Cupolas



staircase leading to an U-shaped choir. The choir commands a magnificent view of the central part of the cathedral. The immense height, the profusion of spatial volumes, the bulky forms and their unhurried, solemn rhythm — all typical features of medieval architecture — evoke in the beholder a feeling akin to awe.

Today the cathedral's interior is somewhat different from the original one. In the old days, it was higher: the old floor was unearthed at the depth of about one and a half metres. The tall iconostasis introduces a jarring note into the otherwise unified architectural space, separating the altar from the rest of the interior. Previously in place of the iconostasis stood a low wooden screen, and the interior thus looked more integral and monumental.

Most of the existing murals were painted at the end of the 19th century by artists from the town of Vladimir. Originally, the interior was decorated only with icons and some frescoes on the piers and walls. It was in 1109 that the cathedral was frescoed in its entirety. Unfortunately, only a few fragments of the 11th- and 12th-century frescoes have survived. These include representations of the Archangels and the Prophets in the main dome as well as of the Byzantine Emperor Constantine, his mother Helen, and a deesis range with the well-preserved figure of the Apostle Peter in the southern, Martirius side-chapel. A large number of graffiti — inscriptions scratched on the stucco — which are especially abundant in the stair-tower, should also be placed in the category of ancient representations. Apart from shedding light on the history of the cathedral, they mention the names of the artists and provide an insight into the different aspects of Novgorodian daily life.

The cathedral's oldest icon is Sts Peter and Paul dating from the mid-11th century (now on a permanent display in the Novgorod Museum of History, Architecture and Art). The earliest icons in the iconostasis are the recently restored Church Feasts, painted by Greek or Serbian artists in 1341. In addition to the main iconostasis there is a minor one of the 16th century in the Nativity side-chapel. St Sophia contains a rich collection of applied art. Many of its holdings are exhibited in the Palace of Facets. The most interesting items include the great Zion, a panagirion and various ritual vessels and vestments. Worthy of note are also the prelate's and royal prayer thrones (1560 and 1572 respectively), two brilliant examples of the woodcarver's art.

The Cathedral of St Sophia was to exercise a major influence on the development of Novgorodian architecture. Its image, imbued with a stately beauty, is mirrored both in large edifices and

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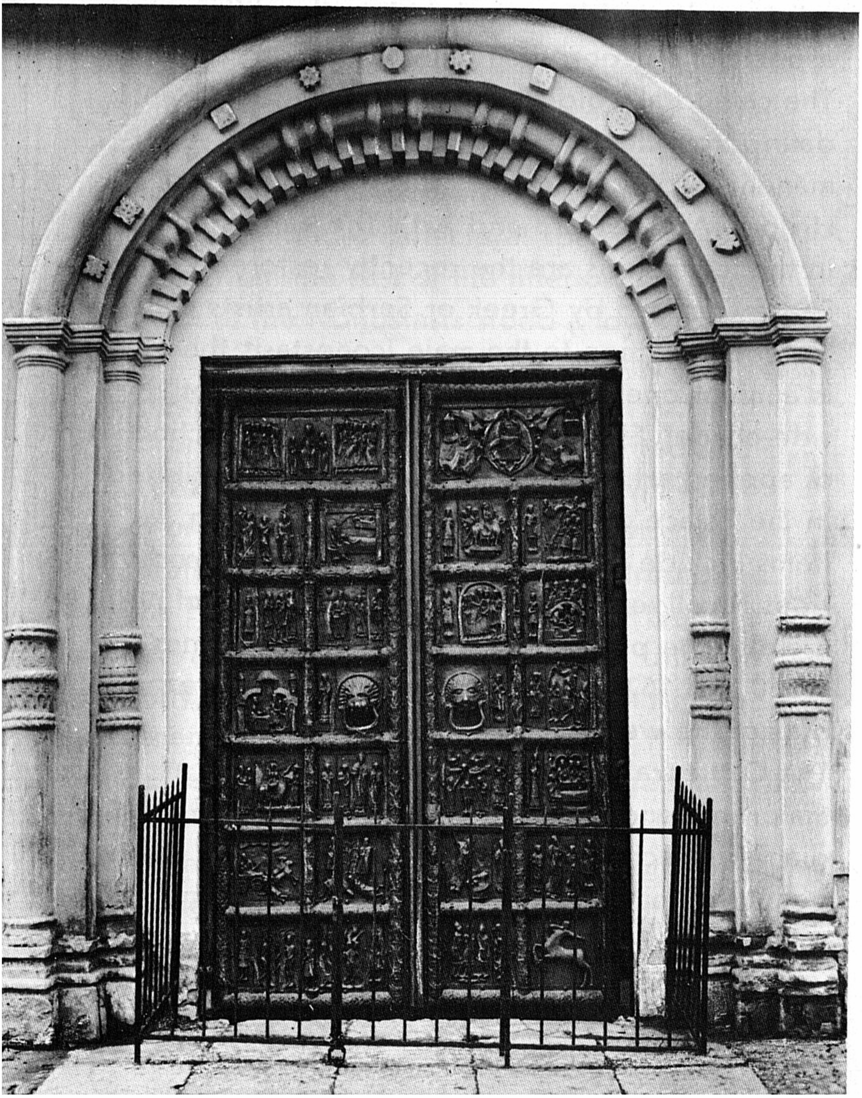
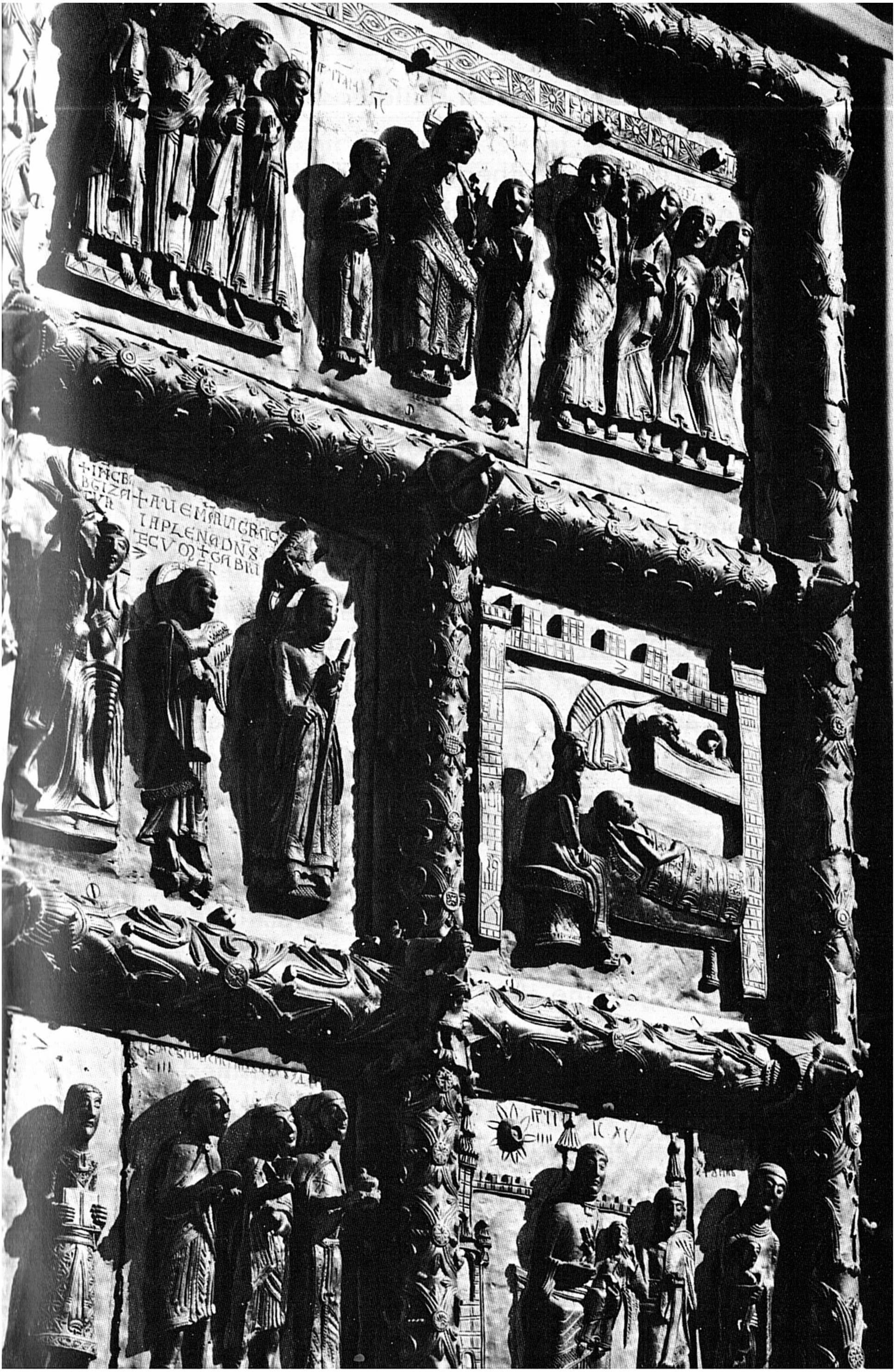
St Sophia's.
Magdeburg (Sigtuna) Gate
12th century

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in relatively small, modest buildings of the 12th—16th centuries.

To the north of the cathedral stands St Nicetas's Building, erected upon old foundations in the 17th century.

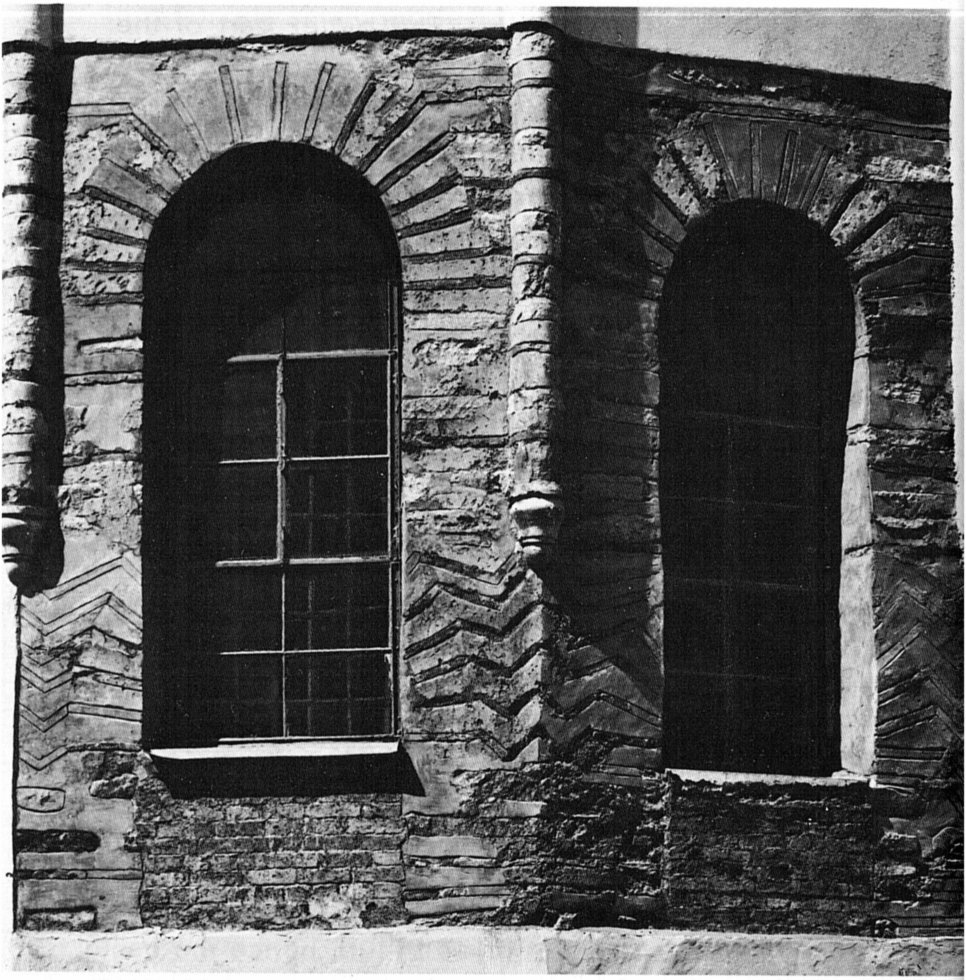
On the north-western side the cathedral overlooked Archbishop's Court, an example of civic architecture. It was here that Novgorod's feudal lord, head of the Veche republic, held his residence. The Archbishop's wooden palace was constructed in the 12th century; the stone building appeared in 1433. The existing main part, the so-called Palace of Facets, was used for secular and religious ceremonies. Its large state hall has a round central pier with vaults resting on ribs. The Gothic style of the vaults, quite unusual for Russian architecture, fully accords with the chronicle stating that "German masters from overseas" took part in the construction, working side by side with the Novgorodians. Gothic details can be seen on the eastern façade, too.

The palace was seriously distorted by 19th-century alterations and additions, among others, a staircase leading to the state hall, the interior painting and a plain flat roofing instead of the former high one. Moreover, the thick cultural layer formed around the building buried its lower floor. Because of this, the palace looks as if it has only two floors. The Palace of Facets now houses a museum of applied art. The better part of the extensive exhibition consists of enamels, silverwork, embroidery, etc.

Next to the palace, on the southern side, is the Gate-Church of St Sergius of Radonezh (1463), frescoed in the 15th century. The dedication of the church to the Moscow saint was looked upon as a tribute to the idea of Novgorod's unification with Moscow.

Standing nearby is a pillar-like bell-tower (17th century), decorated, in a Muscovite fashion, with a pyramid of kokoshniks (superimposed arches rising to a point, resembling the Russian woman's headdress). West of it, are two buildings extending along the kremlin wall, whose façades bear unmistakable features of 17th- and early 18th-century architecture. The northern building accommodated the judicial and ecclesiastic offices of Novgorod's archbishops. The southern building was erected in the 15th century and later remodelled for the Slavic and Greek school opened in 1706. Among its teachers were the brothers Joannichus and Sophronius Lycud, hence the name, the Lycud wing.

The belfry of St Sophia is a monument of the 15th—17th centuries. The first stone structure with three stair-wells was raised in 1439. In the 16th century the lower stair-wells were sealed off and a new top was made of six rectangular pillars

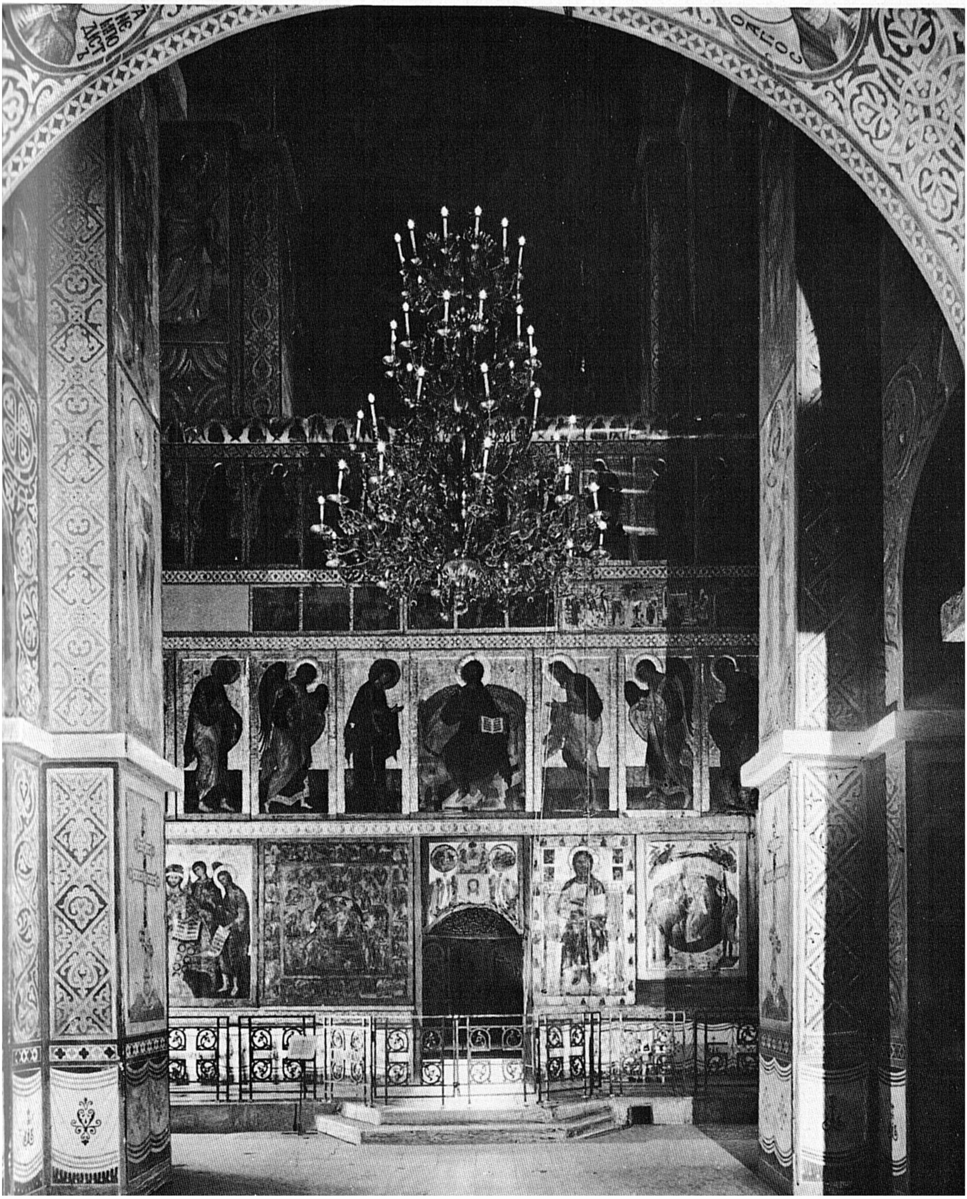


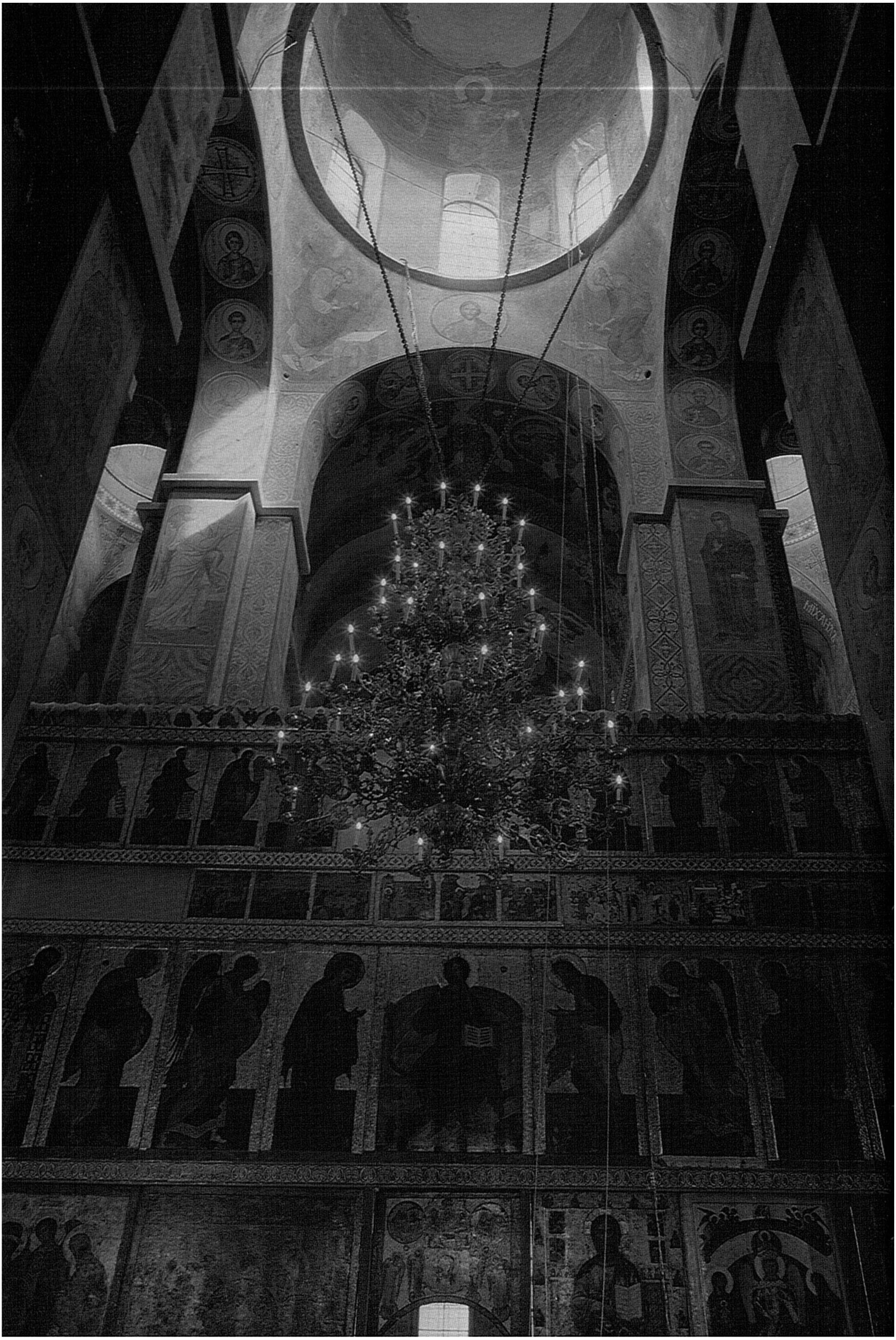
15

St Sophia's.
Masonry of the apses

16

St Sophia's. View on the iconostasis from the central nave





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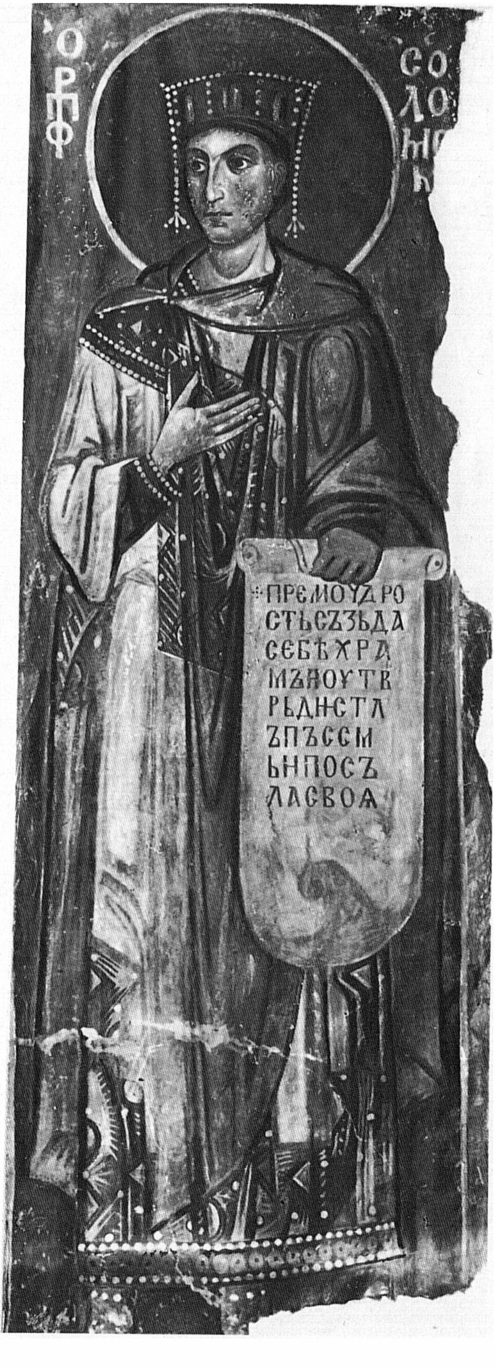
St Sophia's.
Central nave

18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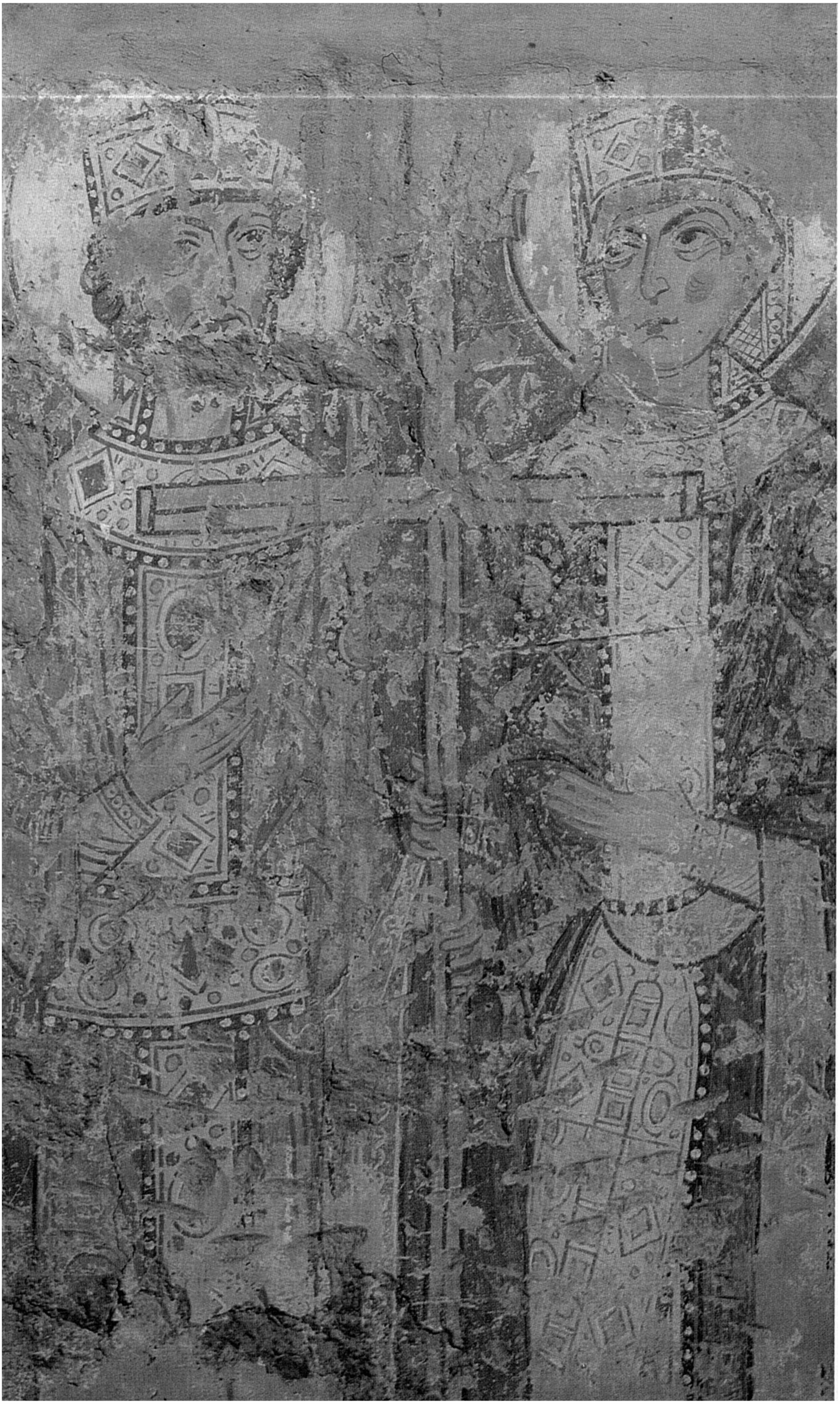
St Sophia's.
The Prophet Solomon, Fresco in the dome.
12th century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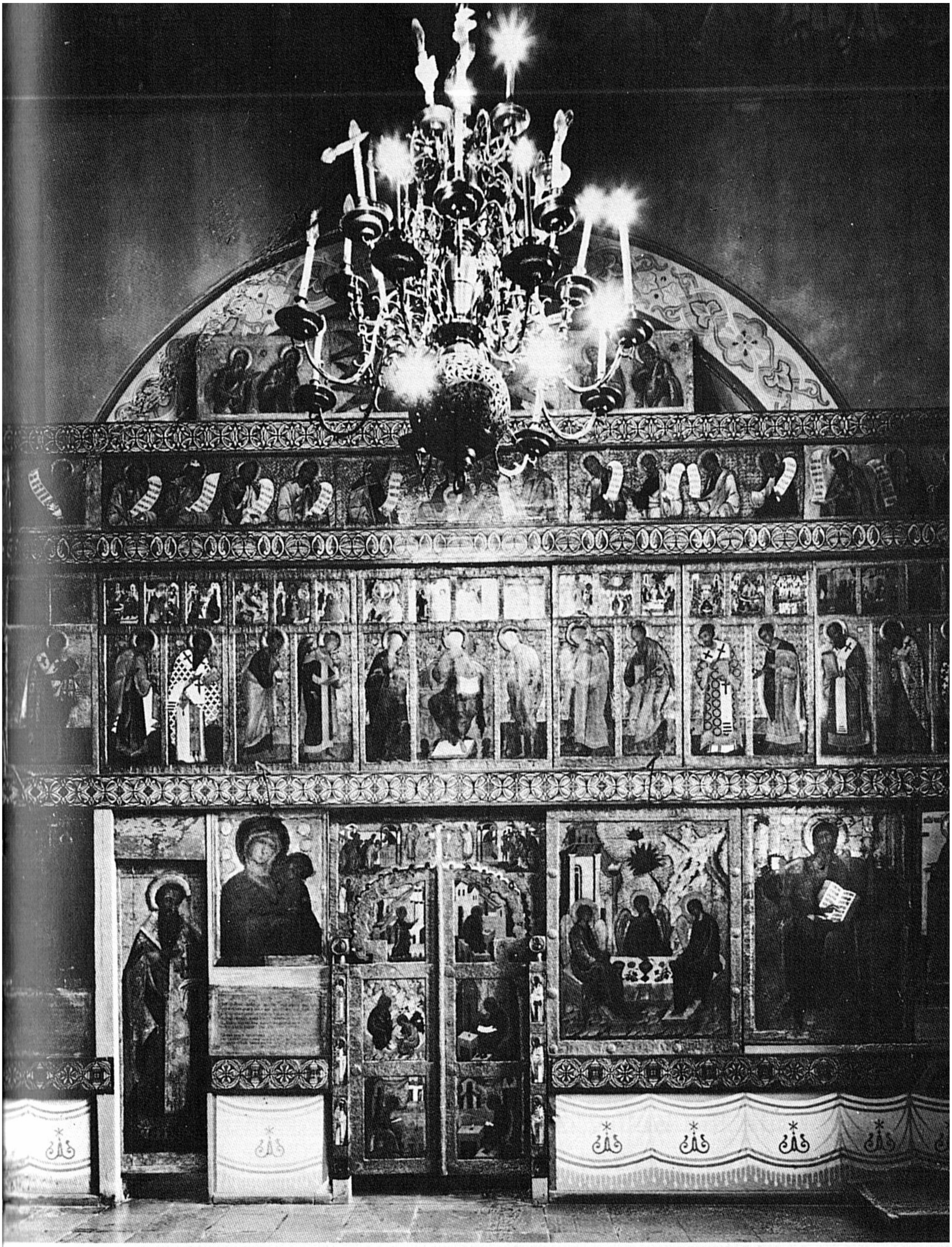


19

St Sophia's.
Constantine and Helen
Frescoes. 11th century

20

St Sophia's.
Minor iconostasis
16th century

with rounded corners. The structure was surmounted by five tent-roofs. The existing surmount dates from the 19th century. The bells now on view in front of the belfry were cast in the late 16th and 17th centuries. The belfry of St Sophia served as a prototype for structures of this type in Moscow, Rostov and Tikhvin.

Opposite the belfry is the Church of the Entry into Jerusalem (1759), built on the foundations of a 15th-century structure.

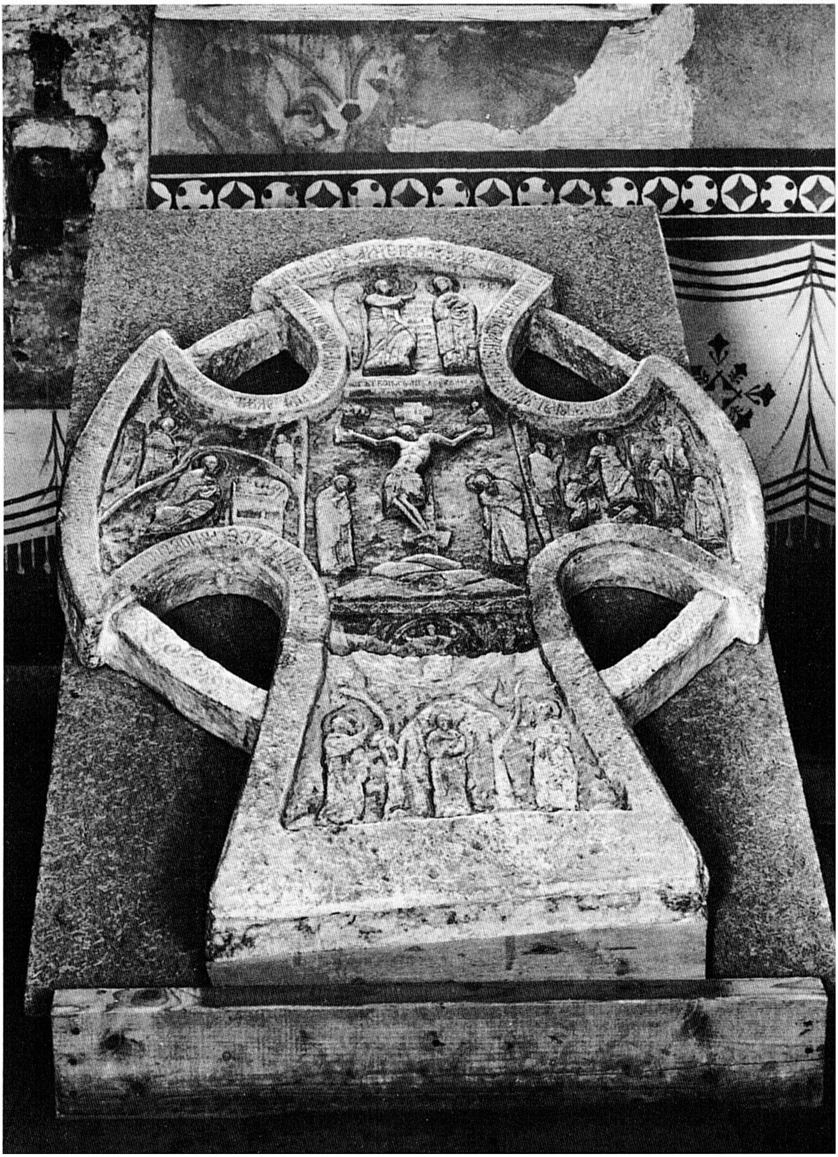
The Millennium of Russia Memorial, standing at the centre of the Detinets, was unveiled on

21

St Sophia's. Graffiti
with a predatory beast
12th—13th century

22

St Sophia's.
St Alexius's Cross
14th century



September 8, 1862. It is the work of Mikhail Mikeshin, an eminent Russian sculptor active in the second half of the 19th century.

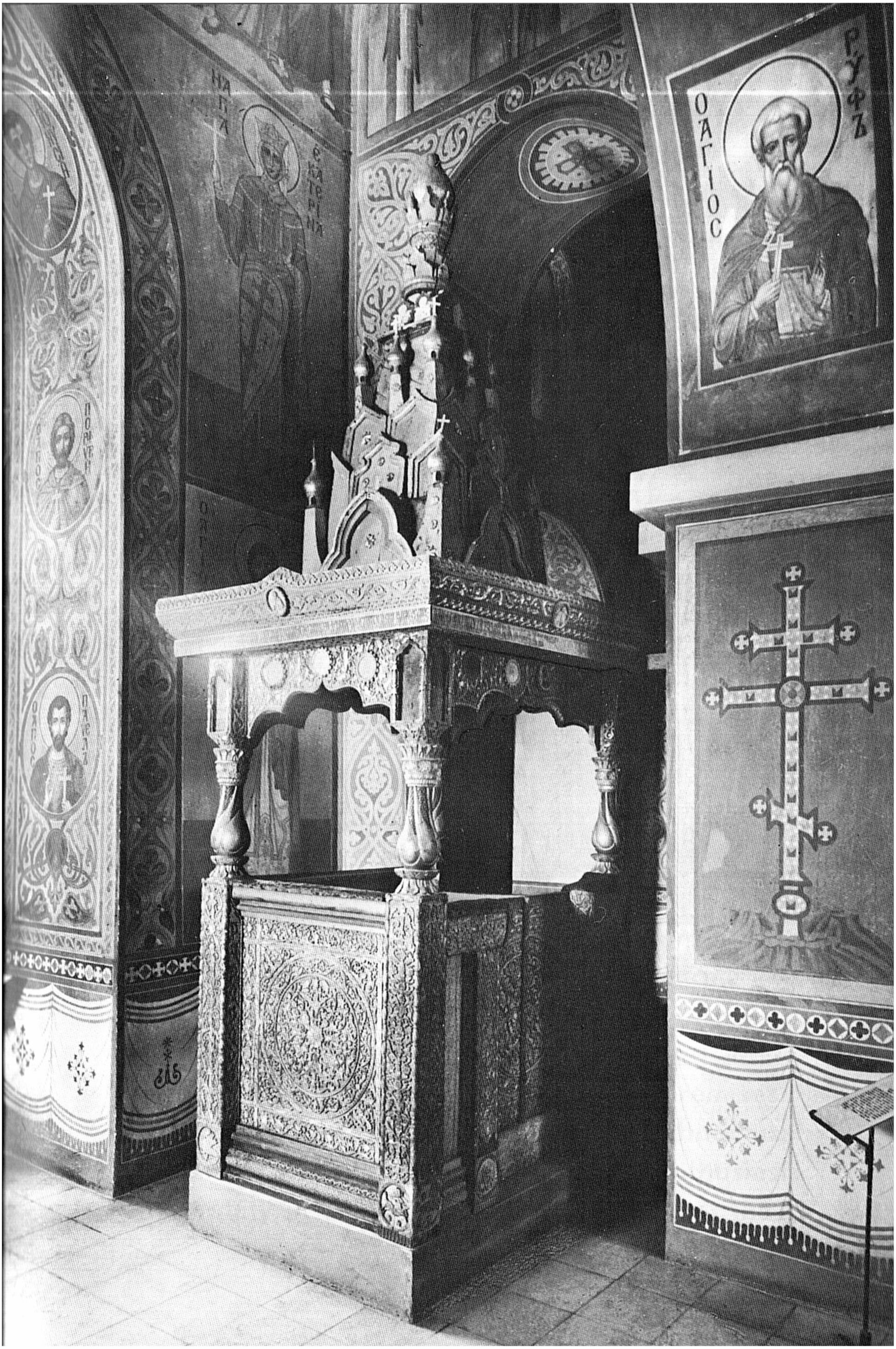
The kneeling figure in the upper tier of the monument personifies Russia. Below, around the sphere, are six groups symbolizing the different periods of Russian history until the first quarter of the 18th century. Represented, among others, are Prince Rurik who, according to legend, was invited in 862 to rule Novgorodian lands; Princes Vladimir, Dmitry Donskoi, Tsars Ivan III and Peter I. The high-relief frieze in the lower tier of the memorial depicts military heroes, statesmen, educators, poets, writers and artists, altogether 109 figures. Here one can see the chronicler Nestor, Princes Yaroslav the Wise and Alexander Nevsky, the Ukrainian hetman Bogdan Khmelnitsky, the founder of the Russian theatre Volkov, the satirical writer Fonvizin, the composer Glinka, the poets Derzhavin, Zhukovsky, Pushkin, Lermontov, the historian Karamzin, and the artist Karl Briullov.

The height of the monument is 15.7 m, the weight of cast bronze is 65.5 tons.

During the World War II, the Nazis dismantled the monument and prepared it for transportation to Germany. Luckily, they never succeeded to accomplish this plan. After Novgorod's liberation, the monument was restored and in November 1944 once again unveiled to the public.

23

St Sophia's.
Prelate's throne. 1560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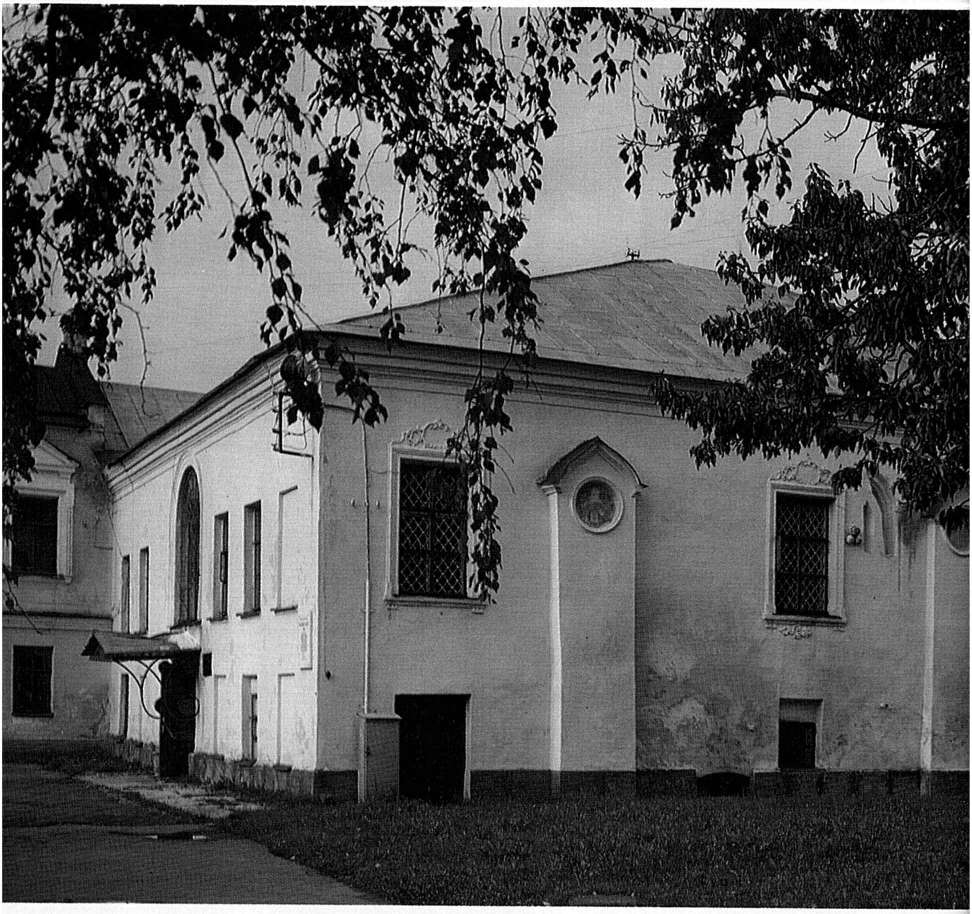


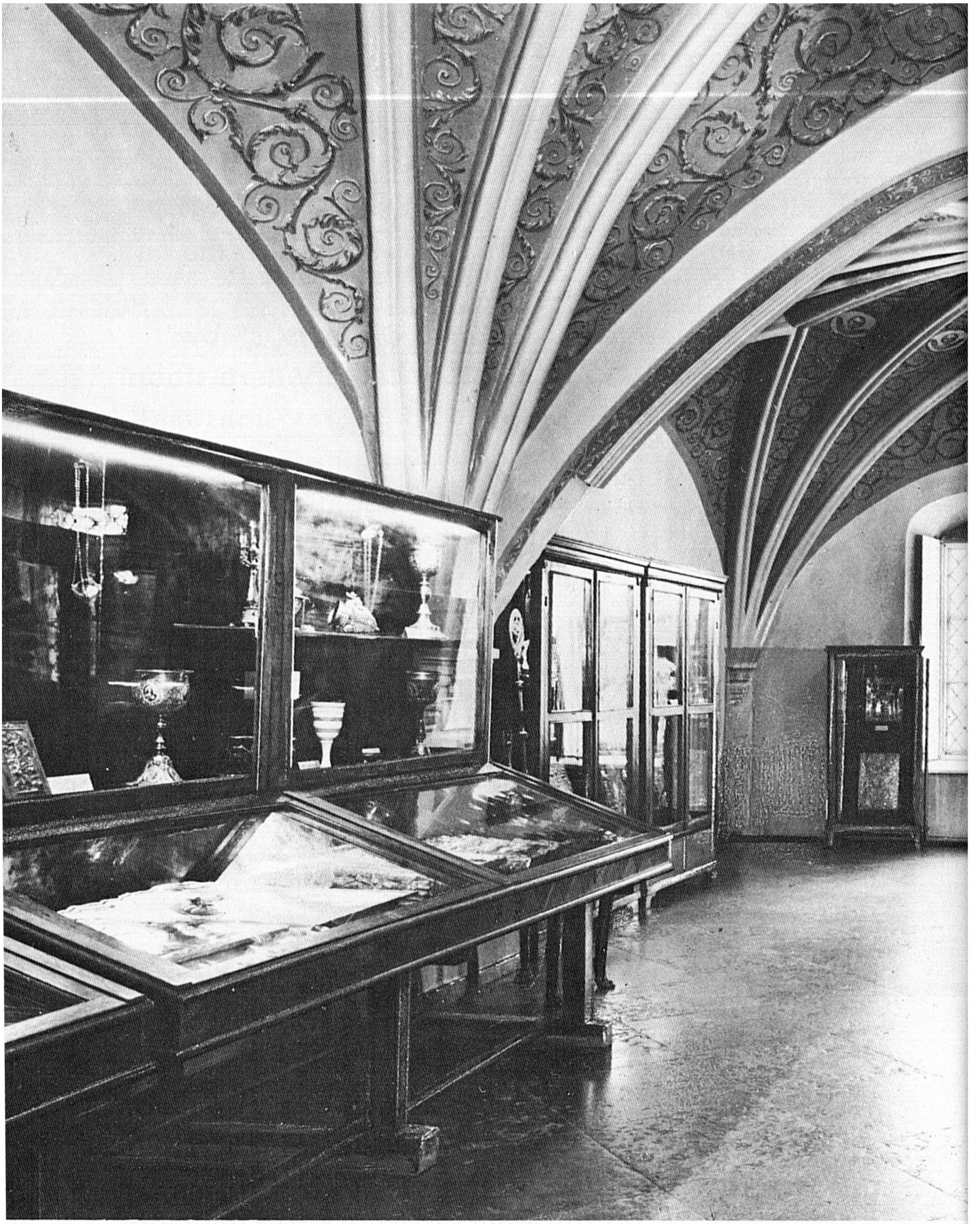
24

The Palace of Facets. 1433

Located in the southern part of the Detinets is the small Church of St Andrew Stratelates, built on the site of the ancient stone Cathedral of Sts Boris and Gleb (1167) in the late 17th and early 18th centuries.

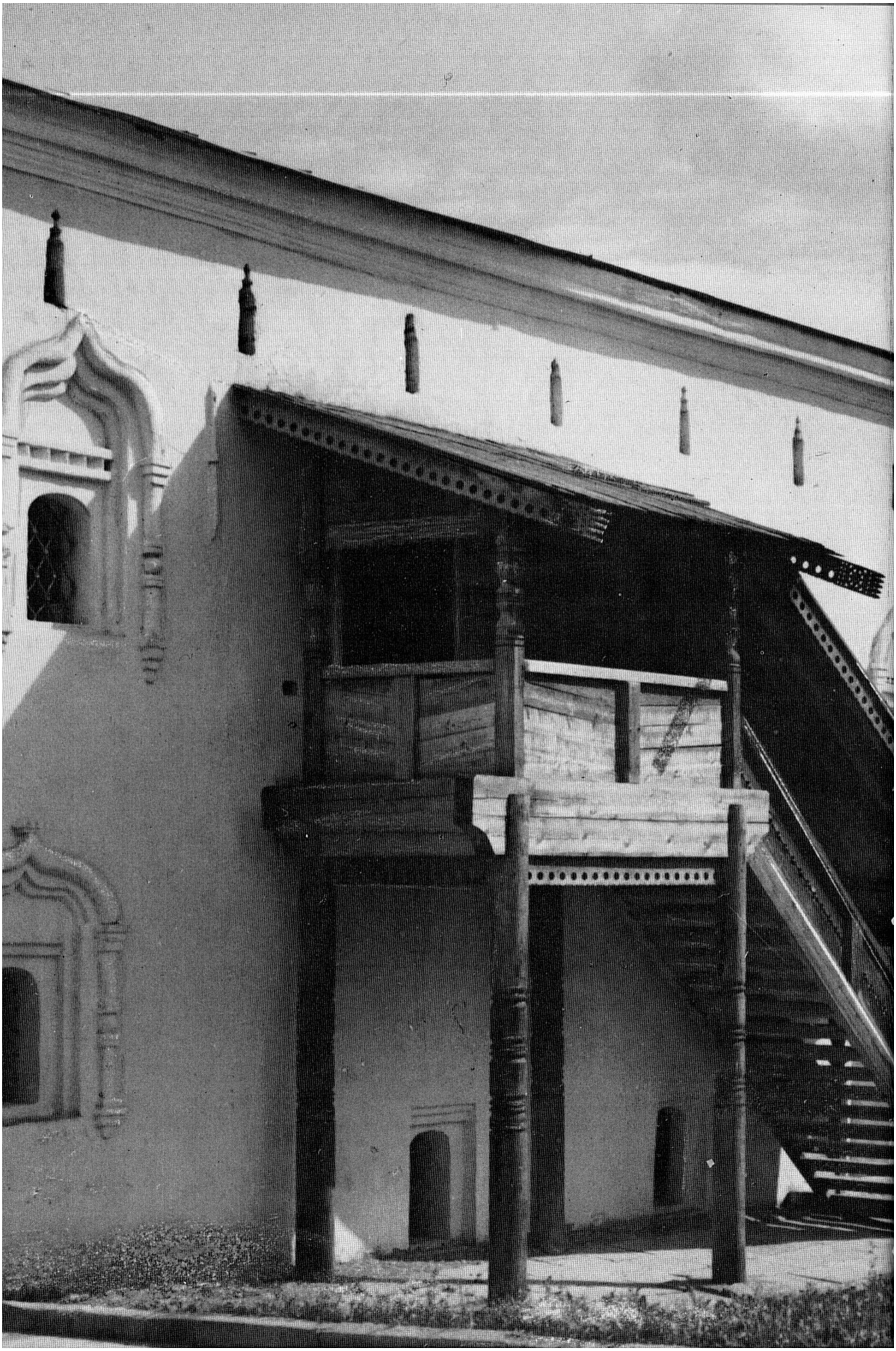
The remaining territory of the Detinets is now unbuilt. However, in the 16th century here stood the princely warehouses of corn, provisions and cannon-balls, the governor's and the dyak's (secretary's) courts. In the 17th century, a large complex of stone buildings, the so-called Voivode's Court, was created under the supervision of Semion Yefimov. Of this complex, only the Church of the Presentation in the Temple (late 17th century) and the Kokui Tower (the main watch-tower of Voivode's Court) exist today. By period standards, this 41-metre-high tower was a true masterpiece of civic architecture.

The three-storeyed building, the largest in the southern part of the kremlin, accommodated the administrative bodies of the Novgorod *gubernia*. In 1817—22 it was reconstructed from designs by I. Roginsky. The Russian writer Alexander Herzen who worked here in 1841—42, left to posterity many vivid accounts of Novgorodian life in the mid-19th century. Today it is the premises of the Novgorod Museum of History, Architecture and Art. It was founded by a group of enthusiasts of antiquity in 1865. The museum introduces the



25

The Palace of Facets.
Interior with ribbed vaults



visitors to the history of medieval Novgorod and its material culture. A wide variety of archaeological artefacts assembled here provide a glimpse into the old handicrafts of the city. The museum possesses a fairly good collection of Russian paintings, including those by leading 18th- and 19th-century artists, such as Vladimir Borovikovsky, Fiodor Rokotov, Karl Briullov, Vasily Tropinin, and Ivan Kramskoi. There are works by turn-of-the-century artists, such as Valentin Serov, Konstantin Korovin and Philip Maliavin, and canvases by outstanding Soviet artists, among others, Konstantin Yuon, Boris Kustodiev, Abram Arkhipov, Arkady Rylov, and Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin. A special section is devoted to contemporary Novgorod artists.

The historico-artistic value of the Novgorod museum, however, lies primarily in its collection of medieval icon painting which is of great national and world importance. Thanks to this collection, as well as that of applied art, the museum may be ranked with such major art repositories as the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow and the Russian Museum in Leningrad.

The icon of Sts Peter and Paul (11th century), the museum's oldest, is also one of the oldest in Russia. It was painted for St Sophia following the completion of its construction. In its freely positioned figures, fine colour harmony and

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26

St Nicetas's. Building
with a wooden porch. 17th century

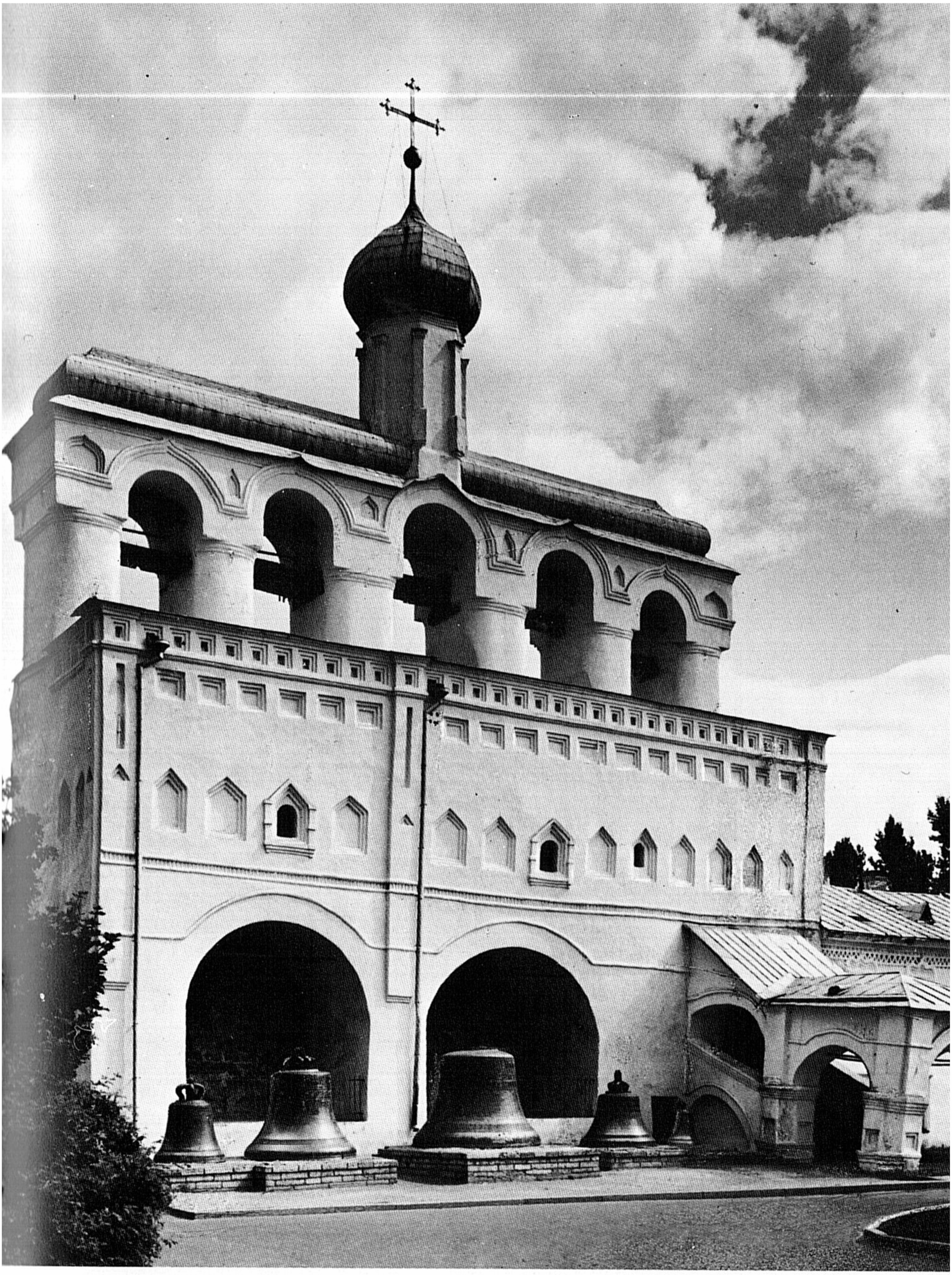
27

Belfry. 1673

monumental images, the icon is akin to the mosaics and frescoes of the Kievan St Sophia. The faces of the apostles were painted in after the 14th century. An excellent example of local workmanship is provided by the icon's silver mount, made in the 12th century.

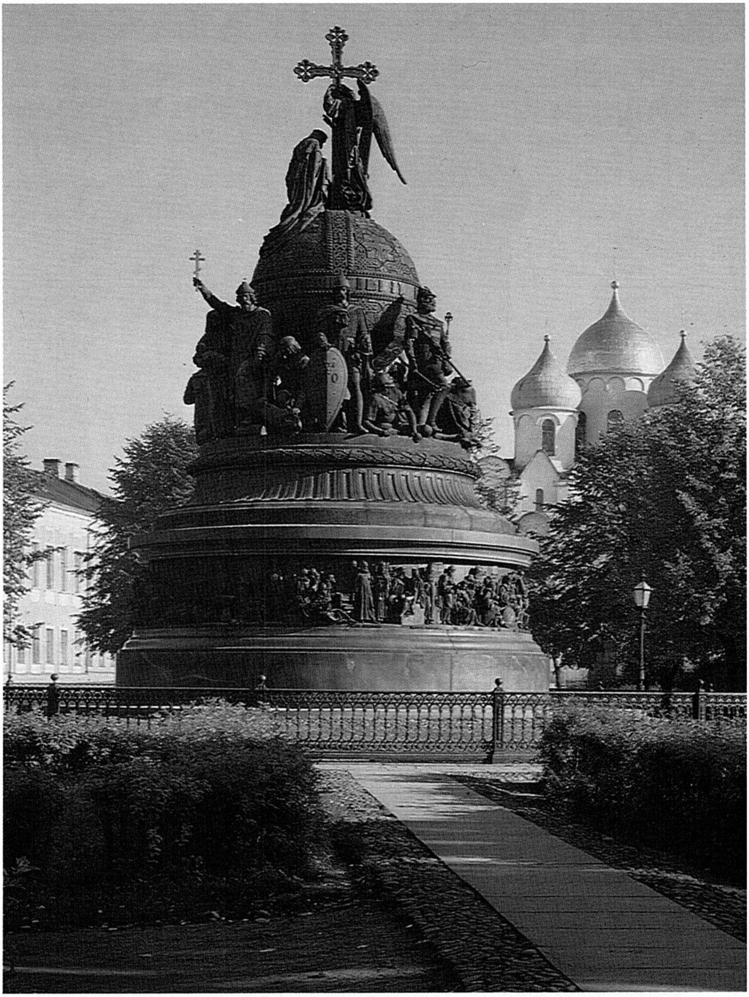
Novgorod's most revered icon was that of Our Lady of the Sign. According to legend, it delivered the city from the besieging Suzdalian host in 1169. The icon occupies a place of honour in the exposition both as a historical monument and as a work of art. The composition, on the whole, is original, of the 12th century, although the painting of the obverse is of later date. The reverse depicts Sts Peter and Natalia (late 12th century), probably the patron saints of the people who commissioned the icon. The handle, fixed to the lower part, shows that this was a processional icon. Also attesting to this fact is its representation in the icon of the Battle between the Men of Suzdal and the Novgorodians, which is housed in the museum.

In the majority of cases, early Russian paintings have not preserved the names of their creators. One of the rare signed works is the icon of St Nicholas of Lipna. As follows from the inscription in its low register, it was commissioned from master artist Alexei Petrov by a certain Nikolai Vasilyevich in 1294. This is one of the few



28

St Sophia's Bell-tower. 1439
Remodelled in the 16th-
19th centuries

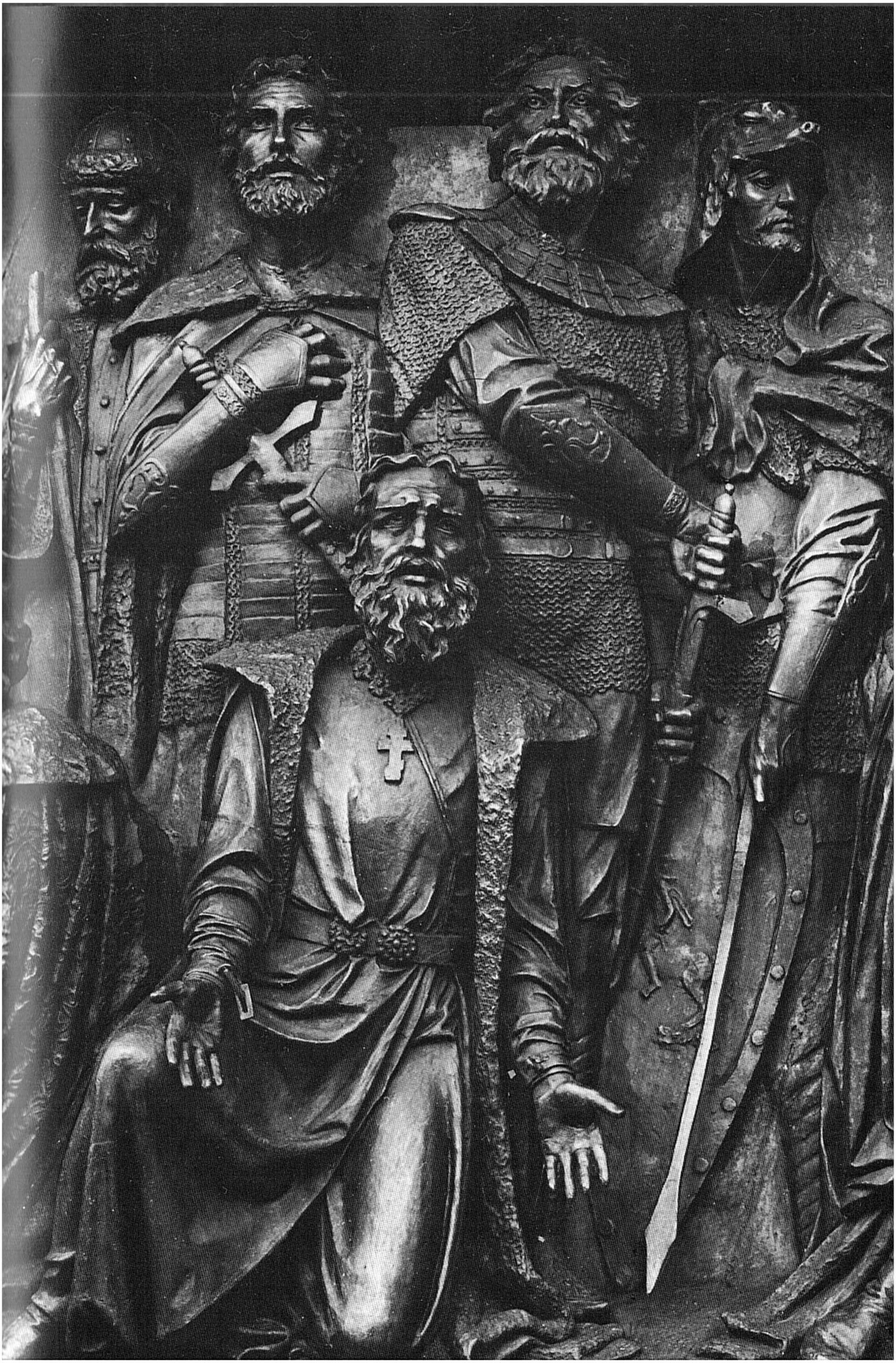


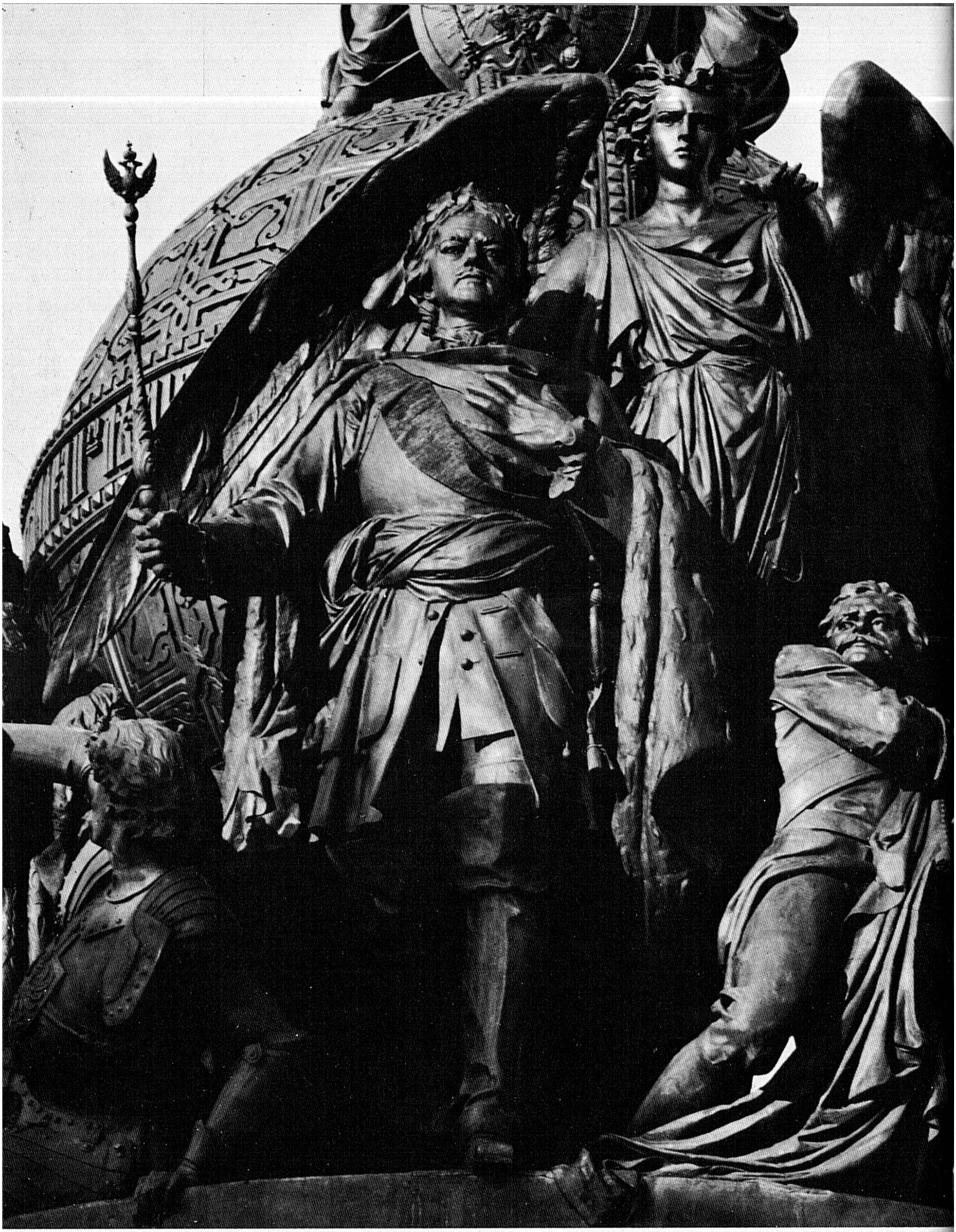
29

The Millennium
of Russia Memorial. 1862

30

The Millennium
of Russia Memorial. Detail





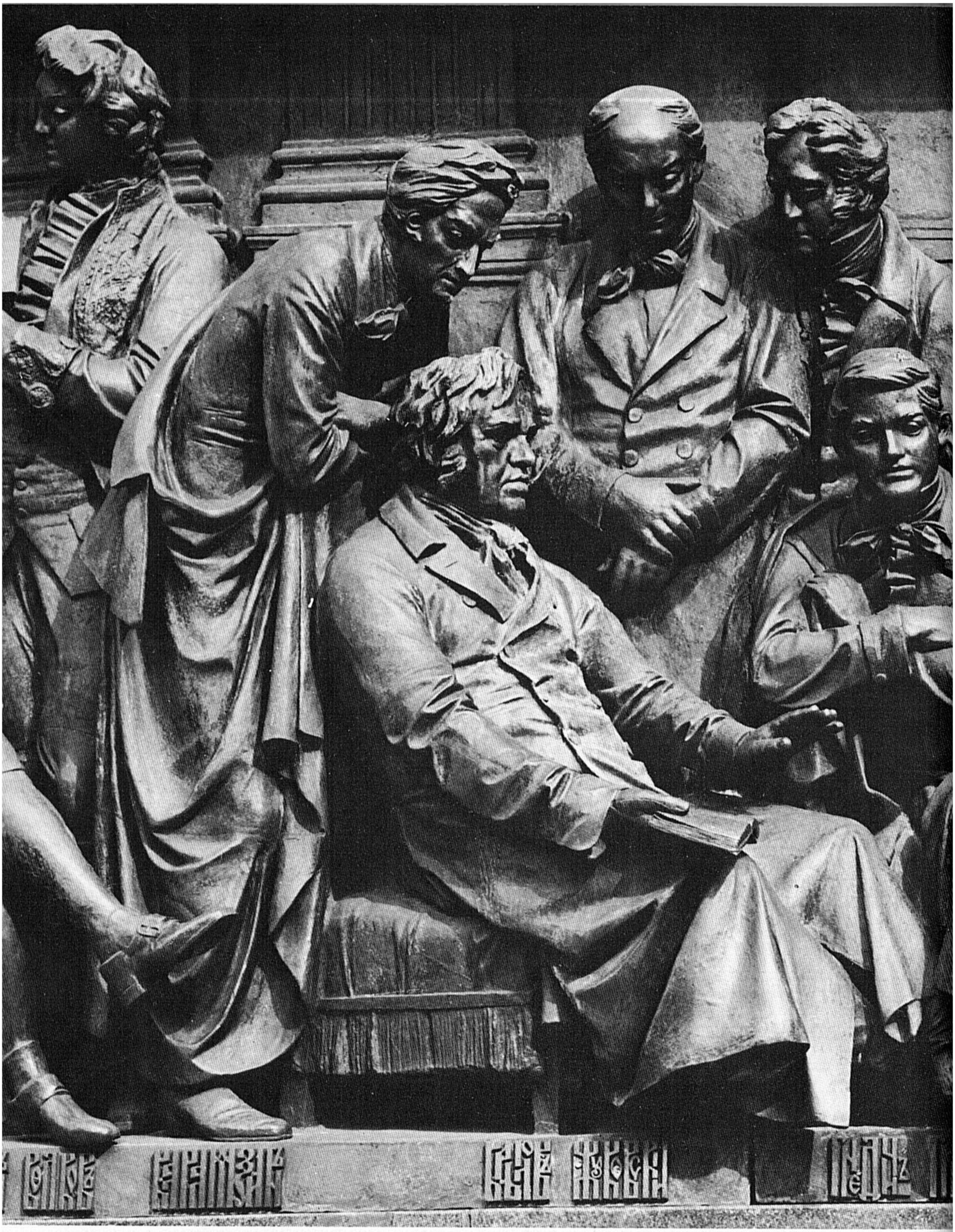
31

The Millennium
of Russia Memorial. Detail

accurately dated examples, a yardstick for dating and studying Novgorodian icon paintings. As is known, the Novgorodian school formed in the second half of the 12th century, although its distinctive stylistics finally crystallized only after the 14th century. During its efflorescence in the 15th century, the icon painting of Novgorod favoured distinct linear silhouettes, radiant colour areas and ideal manly images.

Works of this period figure most prominently in the exhibition. In terms of artistic merit and degree of completeness, the four icons painted for the Church of the Dormition-in-Volotovo-Field are virtually the best. The most noteworthy of these icons (all from the second half of the 15th century) is the Transfiguration. The artist injected a fresh note into the treatment of a traditional evangelical subject and a time-hallowed composition, as a result of which the whole scene seems to be rendered by an awe-stricken witness to the miraculous happening.

There is yet another dated icon of Novgorod provenance in the museum, a Deesis, or the Praying Novgorodians. Judging from the inscription, it was painted for Antip Kuzmin in 1467. By depicting in the low register the members of the boyar Kuzmin family, the artist imparted to this widespread theme a new, non-traditional form. As said in the inscription, the boyars are



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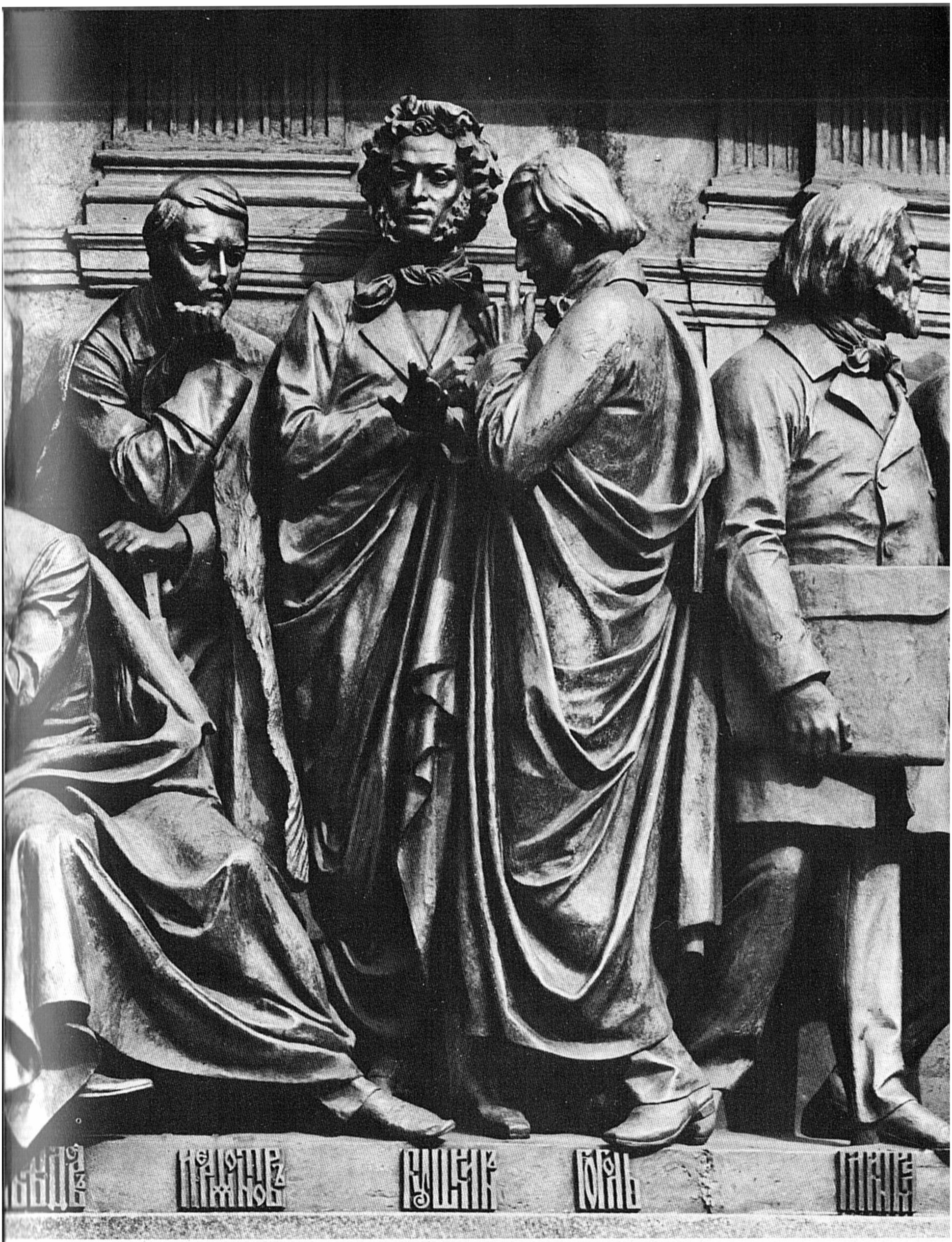
The Millennium
of Russia Memorial. Detail


Лермонтовъ
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Гоголь
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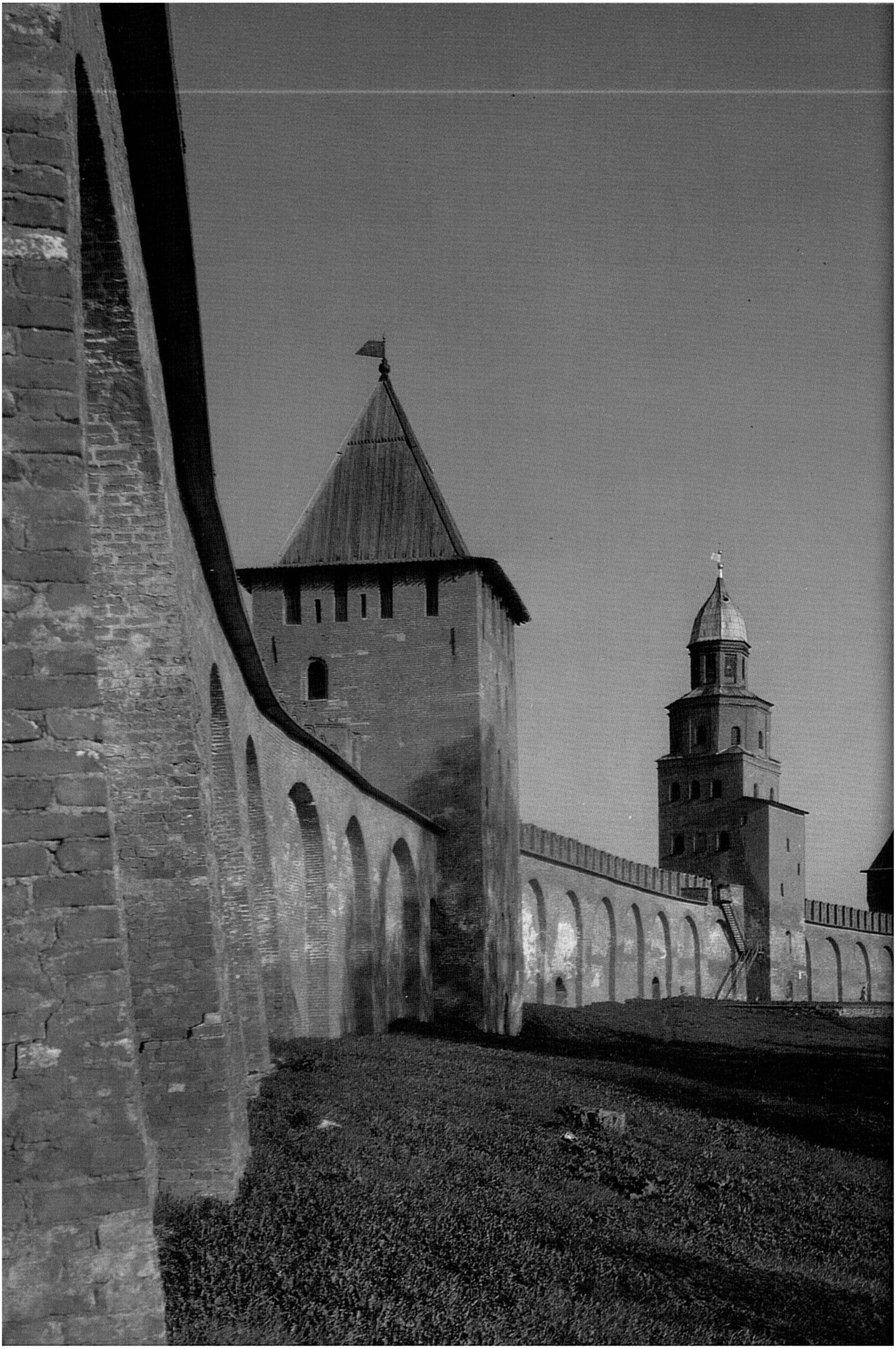


praying to the "Saviour and Our Lady, asking them to forgive their sins" One should especially note here the introduction of such 15th-century realia as dress, footwear and hairdo.

The late 15th and first half of the 16th centuries saw the strengthening of ties between the artistic schools of Novgorod and Moscow. During this period, Novgorodian icon painting, while retaining its distinctive local features, had a very palpable impact on the icon painting of Moscow and, at the same time, felt its influence. The icon of Theodore Stratelates with Scenes from His Life (16th century) may serve as an example of such a rapprochement.

During the second half of the 16th and 17th centuries the Novgorodian school of icon painting gradually fell into a decline and eventually ceased to exist. This was caused by the general decadence of icon painting and also by the fact that Novgorodian artists, seeking to imitate the Moscow canons failed to achieve the necessary perfection of representation.

Among the 16th-century icons, mention should be made of the Vision of the Sexton Tarasius, not because of its artistic value, which is not very high, but rather because of its historic importance. Depicted in the left-hand part of the icon is the Khutyn Monastery with the Cathedral of Our Saviour of the Transfiguration. Seated on the

33

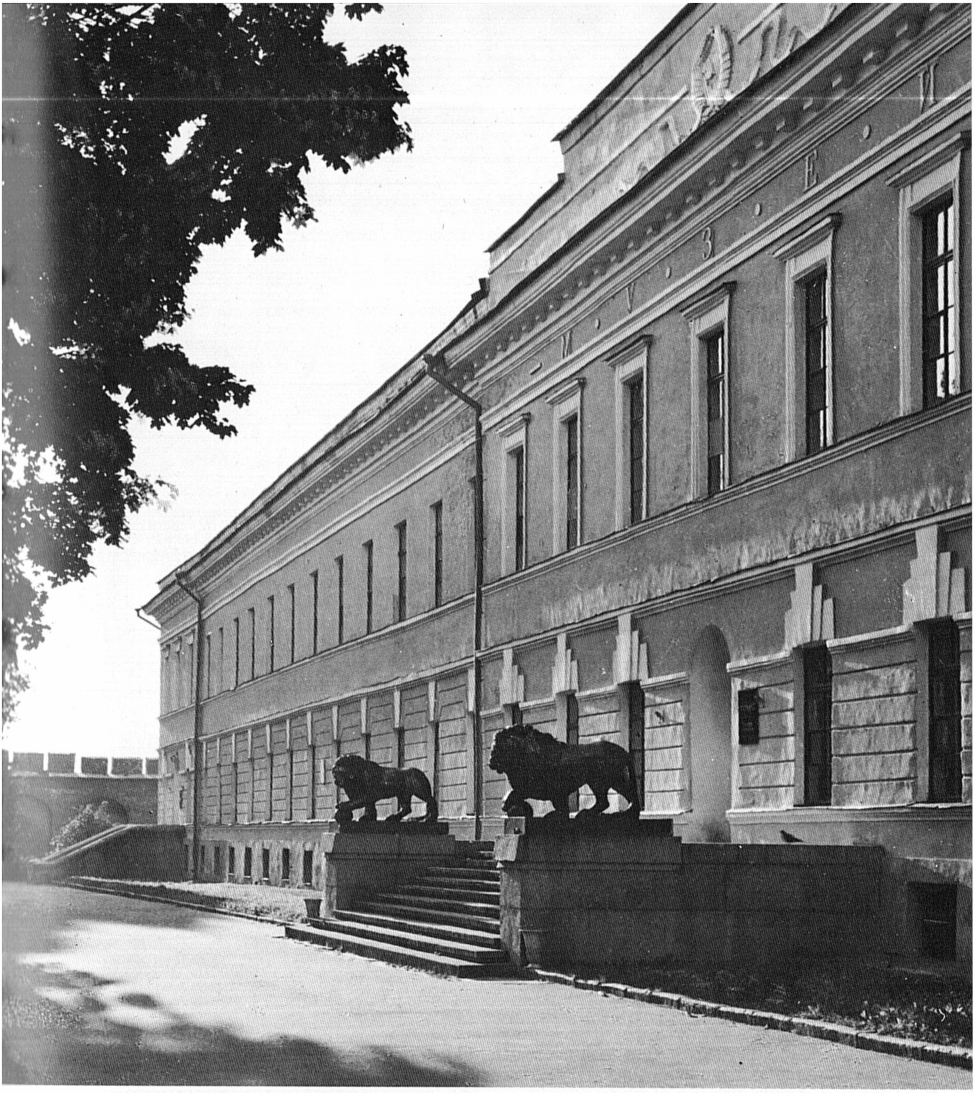
The Detinets
Wall in the southern part

roof of the cathedral is the sexton Tarasius, and in front of him — in the central and right-hand parts — opens the bird's-eye view of Novgorod. This interesting work provides an excellent source for the study of the city's old topography and architecture.

A remarkable example of the Moscow style of icon painting and, perhaps, of the Russian style as a whole is the Vernicle (1674). An inscription at its bottom reads: "this image was painted by Simon, son of Fiodor Ushakov." A famous royal artist, Simon Ushakov was a leading master of the Moscow Kremlin Armoury, author of a thesis on problems of icon painting. In his work he endeavoured to combine the flat manner of old Russian icon painters with three-dimensional elements borrowed from contemporary Western European painting. The Vernicle may be seen as the summing up of early Russian icon painting. Simon Ushakov's icons are the direct forerunner of the secular painting of the 18th century, of the Petrine epoch.

In addition to icons the exhibition includes fragments of frescoes, rare specimens of early Russian wooden sculpture, such as Parasceve Piatnitsa (16th century), a magnificent carved cross (1358) and objects of applied art.

The stone Detinets protected only the nucleus of the city. The vast territory west of the Detinets



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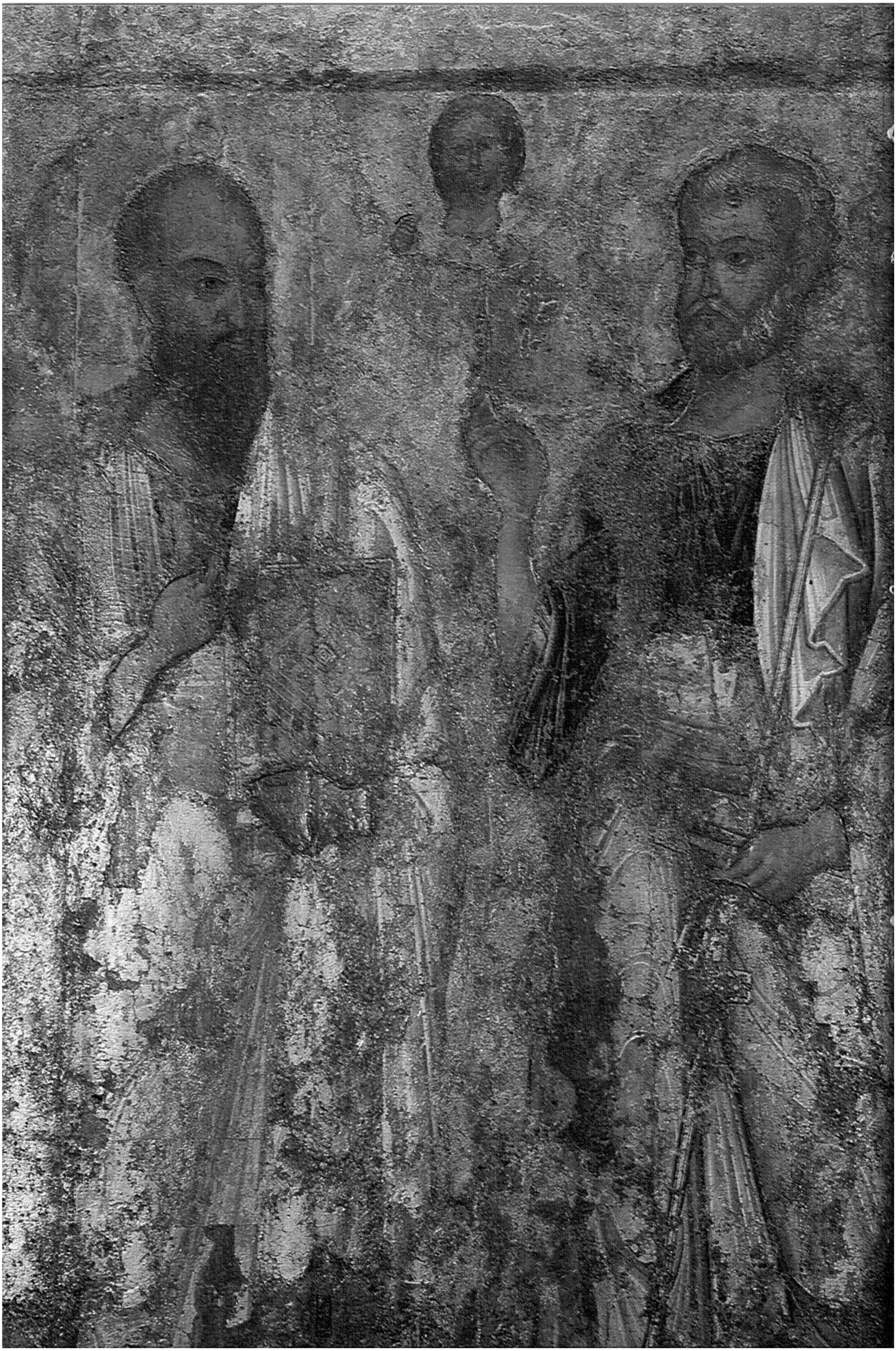
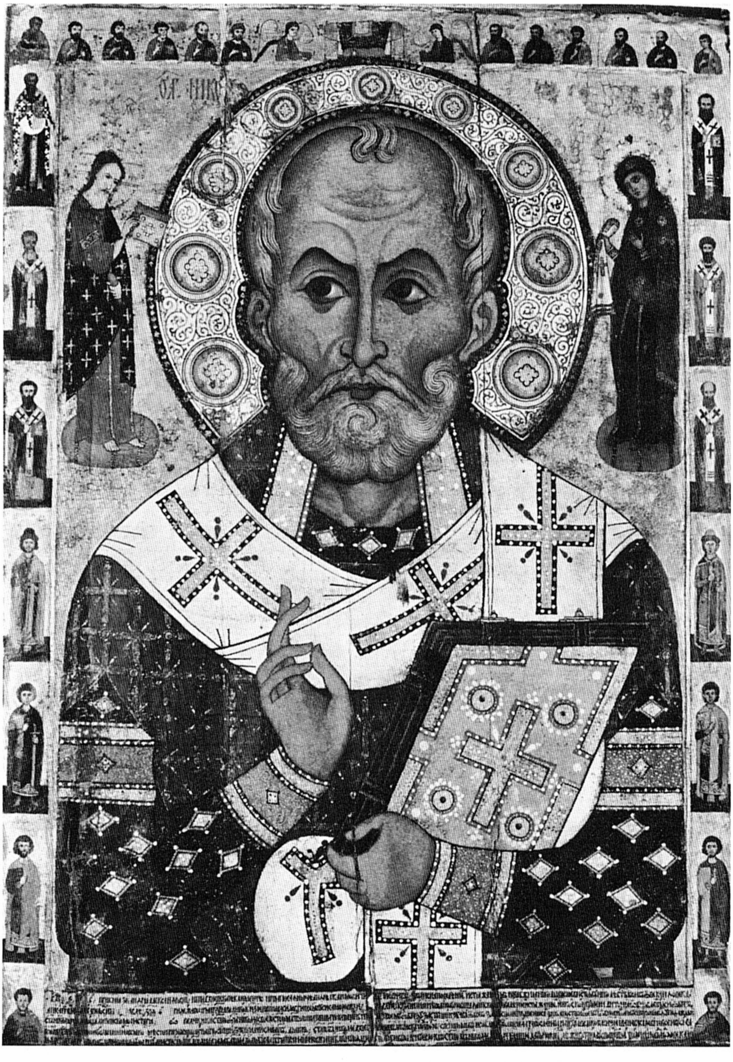
The Building of *Gubernia* Administrative Bodies. 1817—1822. Designed by I. Roginsky (present-day premises of the Novgorod Museum of History, Architecture and Art)





35

Sts Peter and Paul. Icon
11th century
Novgorod Museum
of History, Architecture and Art

36

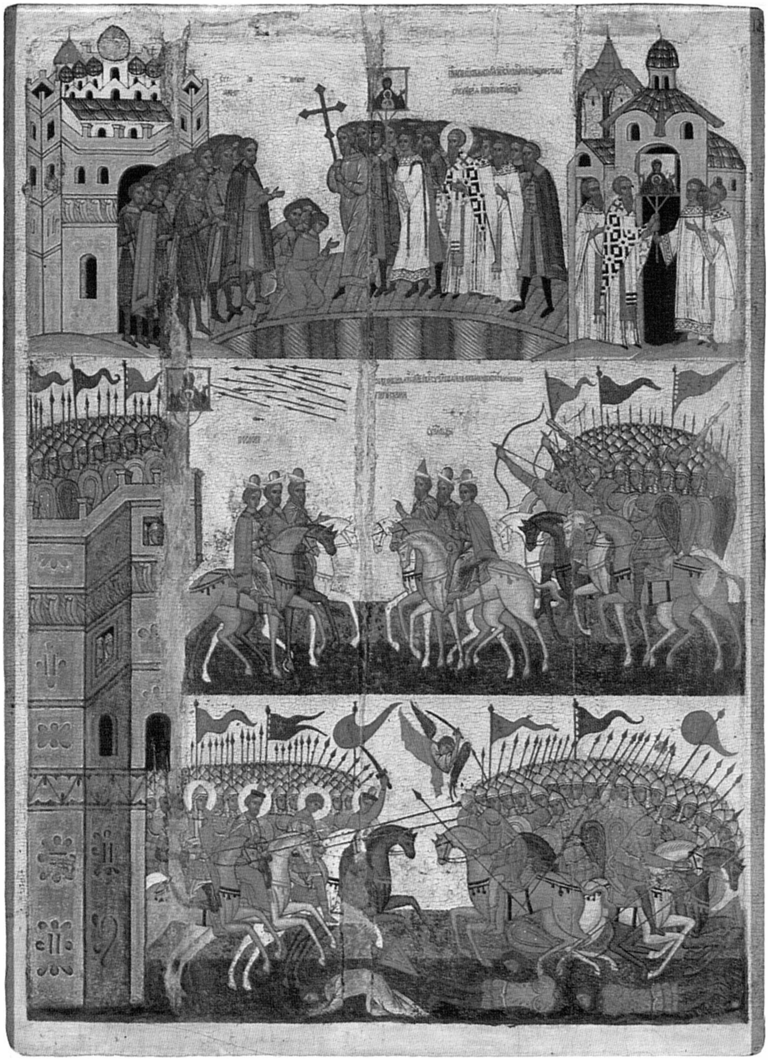
St Nicholas-on-the-Lipna
Icon. By Master
Aleksa Petrov. 1294

and along the banks of the Volkhov lay defenseless. The Novgorodians could not afford to tolerate this situation for long. Therefore, prior to the 13th century, they built around the Outside town several ramparts with a wooden wall on top.

In the 14th century the wall was replaced with a stone one, which gradually became dilapidated, but the slid rampart of considerable extension has survived to our days on both banks of the Volkhov river.

The only existing tower of this Outside town, known as the White, or St Alexius's Tower (late 15th or 16th century), can be seen from the road leading to the St George (Yuriev) Monastery. Three-storeyed, circular in plan, with stairs within the walls, it was surmounted by a tent-roof, like the towers of the Detinets.

The earliest monuments are located in the southern part of the St Sophia Side, beyond the rampart. To the right of the road to the St George (Yuriev) Monastery, there is a tall hill with a graveyard. This is the ancient Sinichya (Titlark) Hill, or the Sinilishche. Standing on its top, almost completely hidden by trees is the Church of Sts Peter and Paul, built on the modest means of the residents of St Luke (Lukina) Street between 1185 and 1192. This small, one-domed church appealed to the tastes of the inhabitants of the Outside town.



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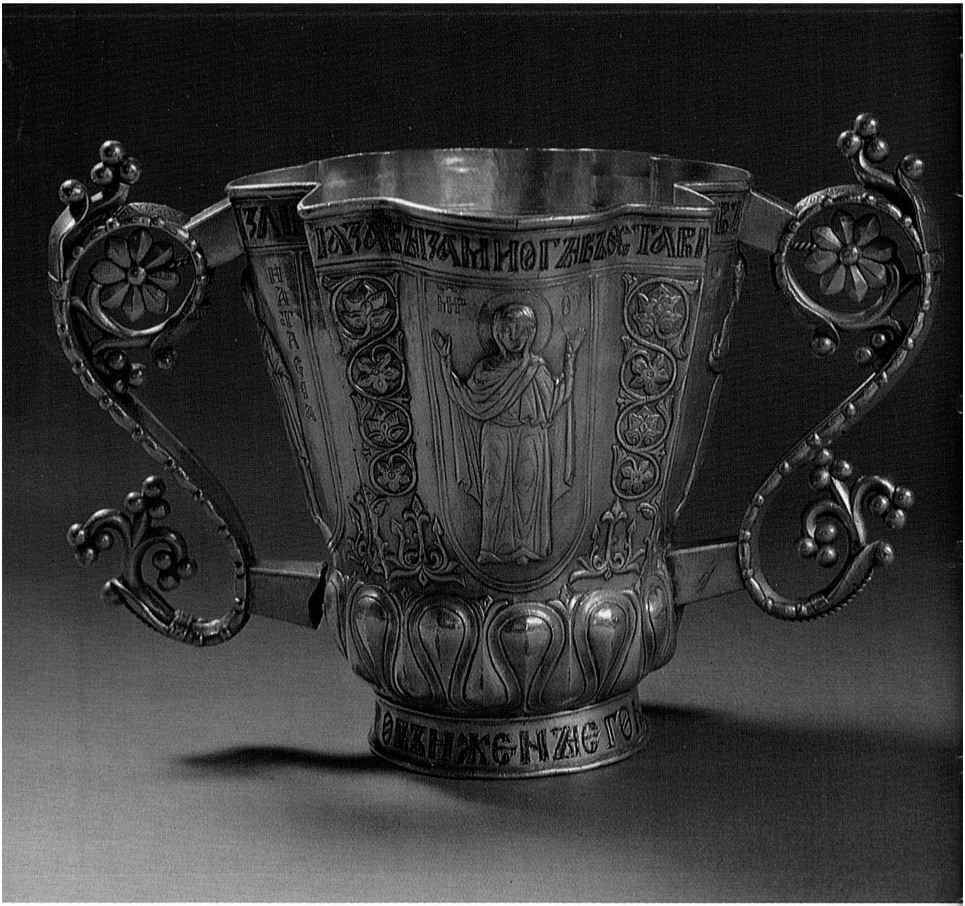
The Battle between the Men of Suzdal and the Novgorodians
Icon. 15th century
Novgorod Museum of History, Architecture and Art



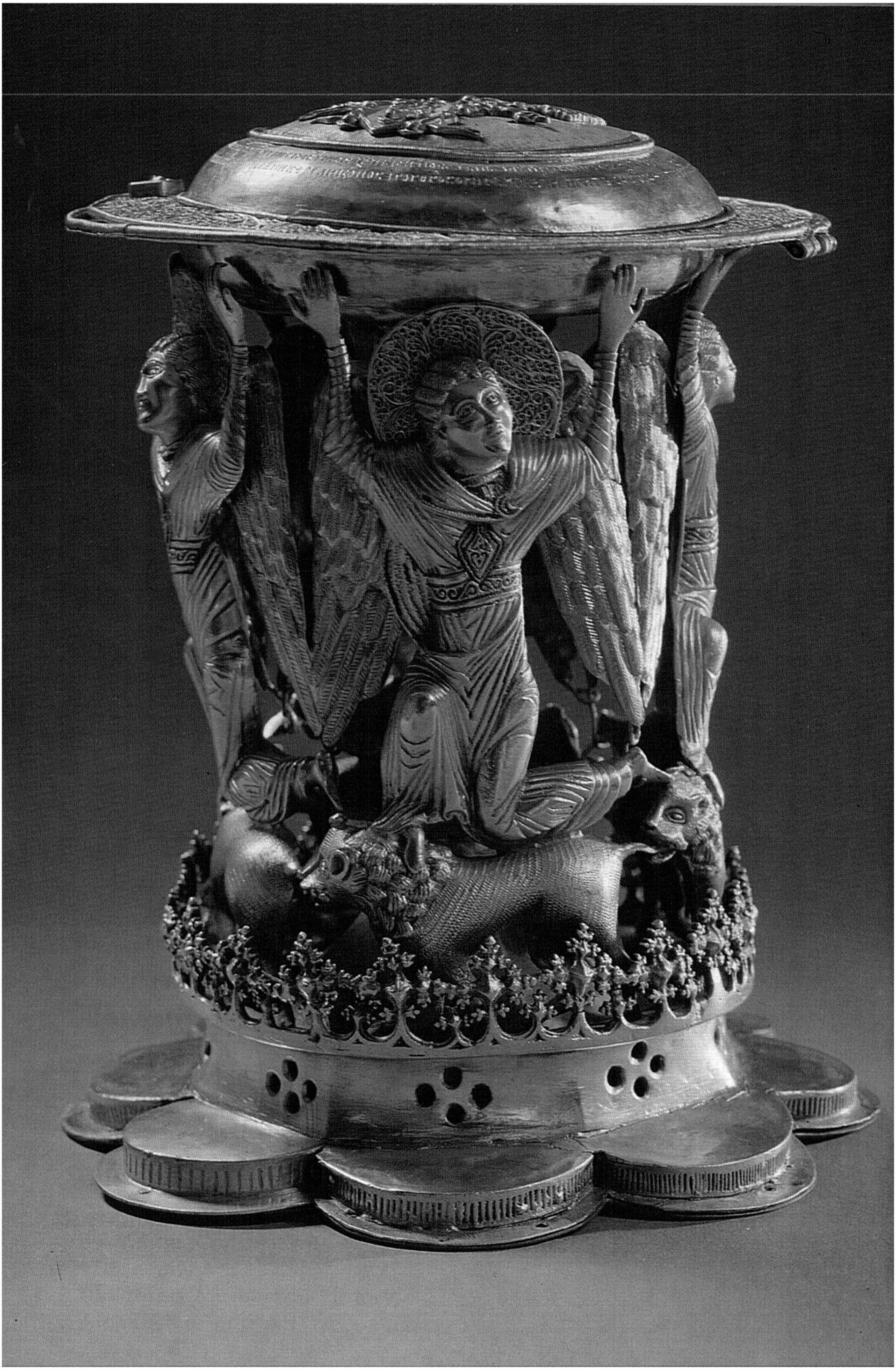
38

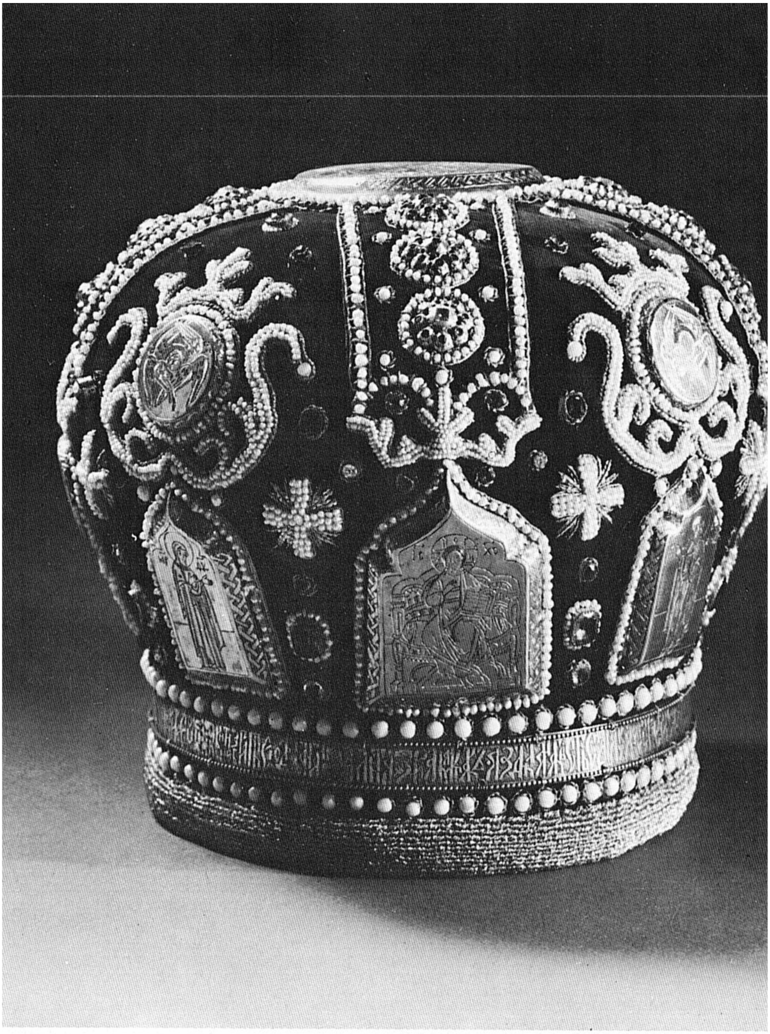
Crater. Novgorod.
By Master Constantin (Costa)
12th century
Novgorod Museum of History,
Architecture and Art

The White Tower commands a fine view on two other churches located beyond the rampart, on the shore of Miachino Lake. The Church of St Thomas was built for the Archbishop of Novgorod in 1195—96. After its collapse, a new church was erected on old foundations in 1464, but in keeping with 12th-century tradition. The nearby Church of St John the Almsgiver (1422) originally resembled the classical Novgorodian structures, 4-pier in plan, single-domed and single-apsed with a typically austere decor (adjoining it on the north was a single-pier chamber). Following substantial alterations of its interior and upper part, the church turned into a pierless structure under a single vault. The west façade is notable for a band of pentagonal niches which was to hallmark 16th-century Novgorodian buildings.

Among the typical examples of 15th-century Novgorodian architecture, the Church of St Blaise (1407; the upper parts of the walls, the vaults and the drum with the cupola restored in the 1950s) and the Church of the Twelve Apostles (1454) deserve particular attention. The Church of the Twelve Apostles is also remarkable for its well-balanced proportions.

From the Church of the Twelve Apostles along Nekrasov Street one can reach the Church of St Theodore Stratelates which stands in the former Shchirkov Street (there is another church dedicated





39

Panagiarion. Novgorod.
By Master Ivan. 1435
Novgorod Museum of History,
Architecture and Art

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Mitre. Novgorod. 1643
Novgorod Museum of History,
Architecture and Art

→

41

The Great Zion. Novgorod.
12th century
Novgorod Museum of History,
Architecture and Art

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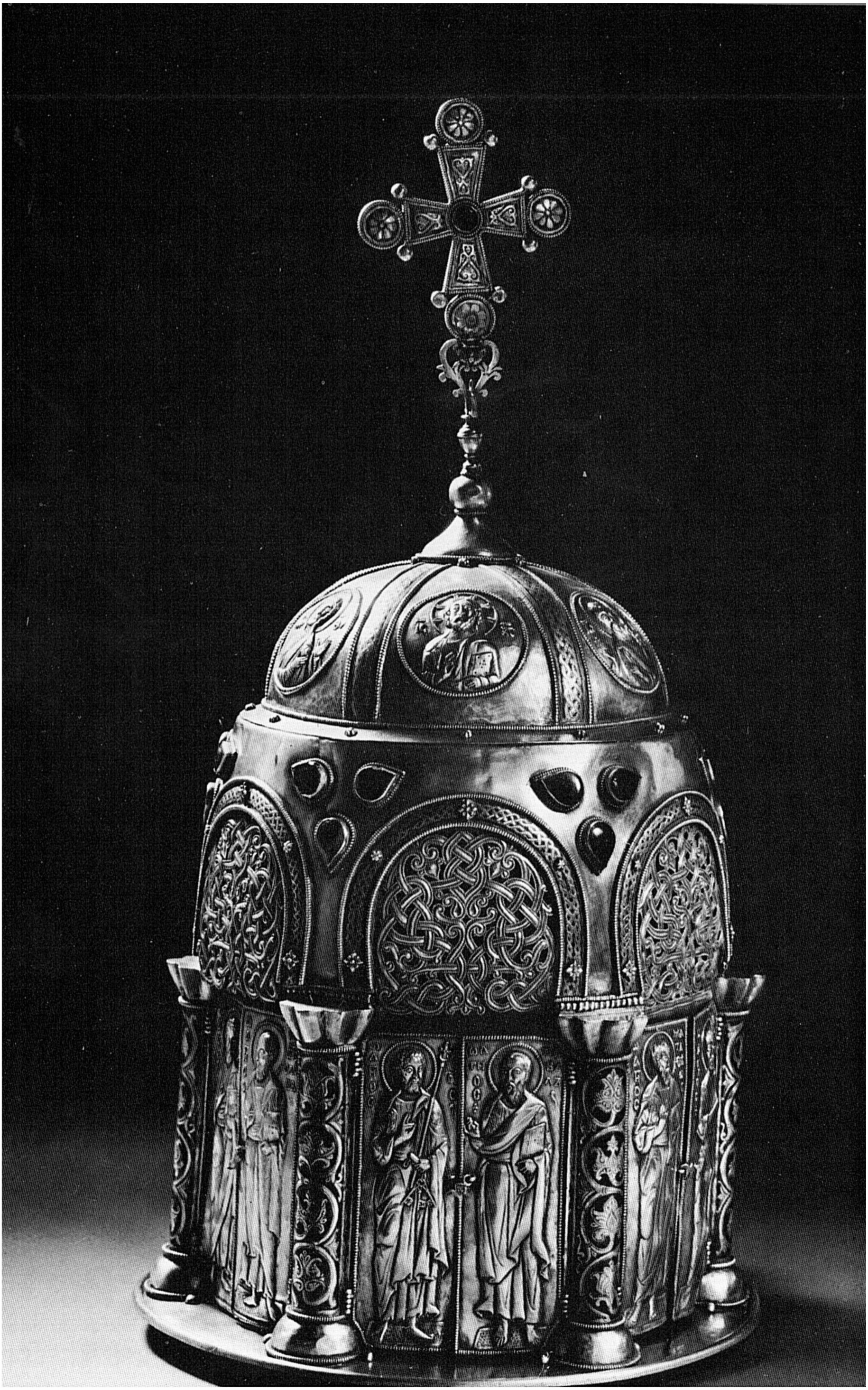
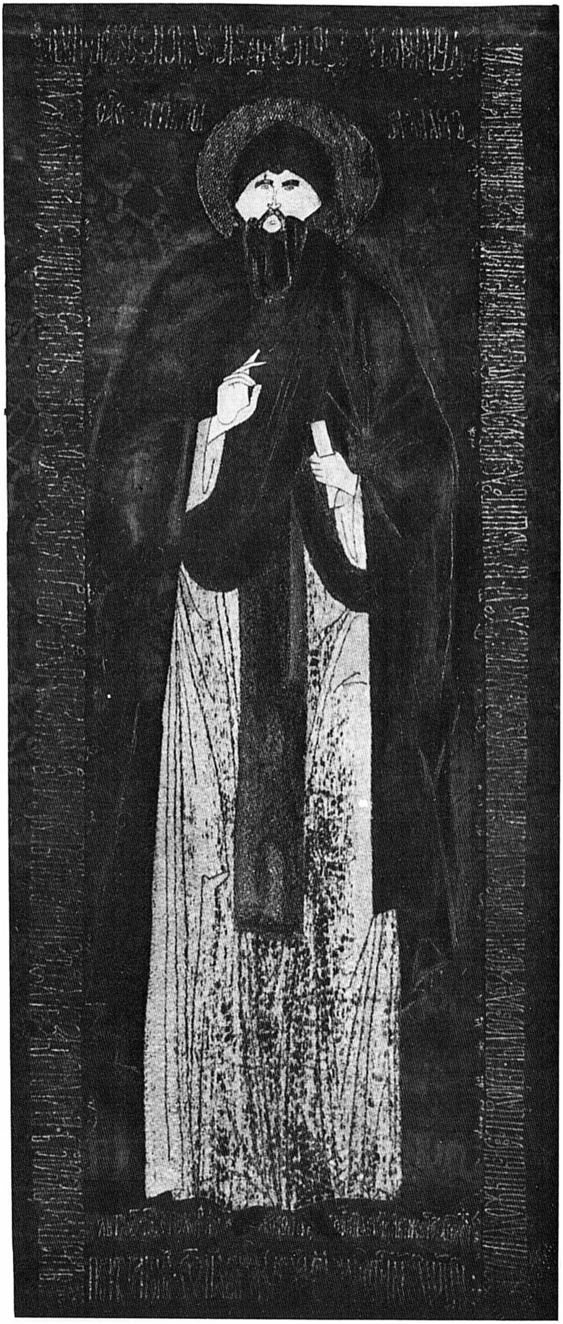
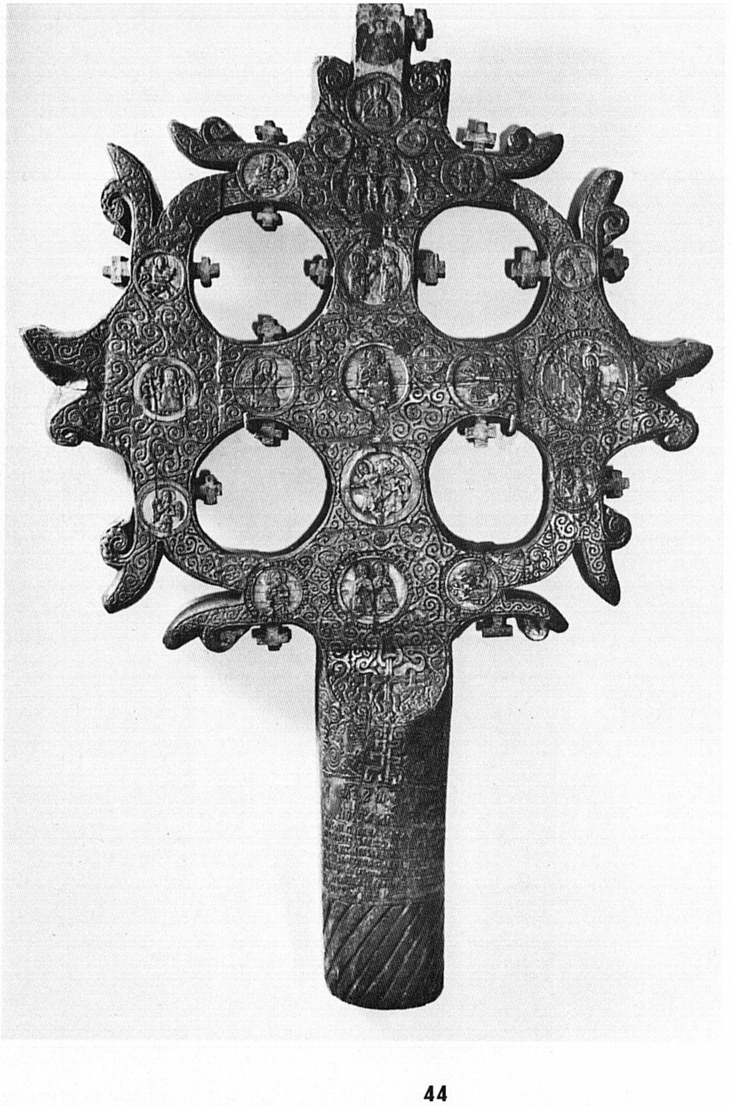
42

St Barlaam of Khutyn
Shroud. 1580
Novgorod Museum of History,
Architecture and Art





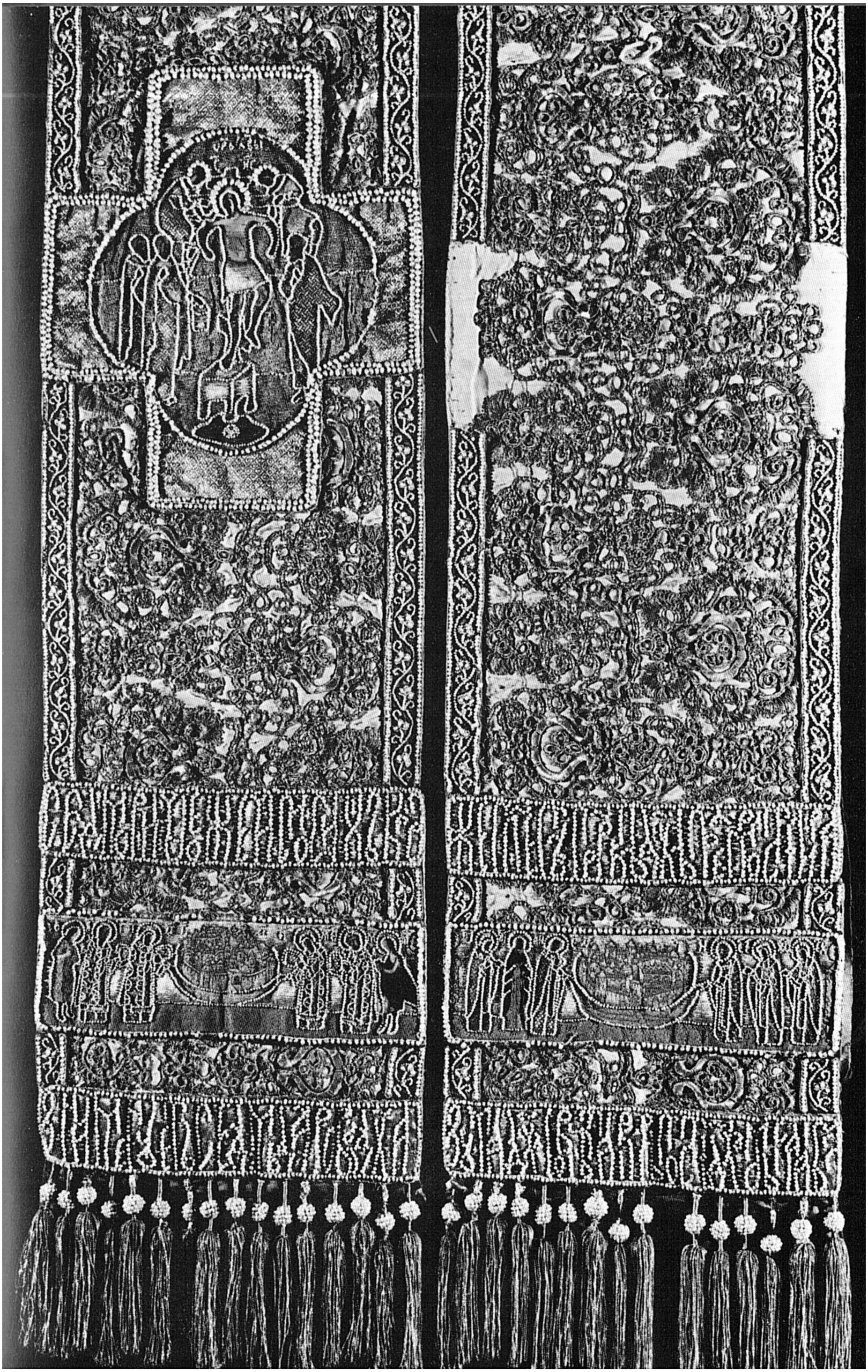


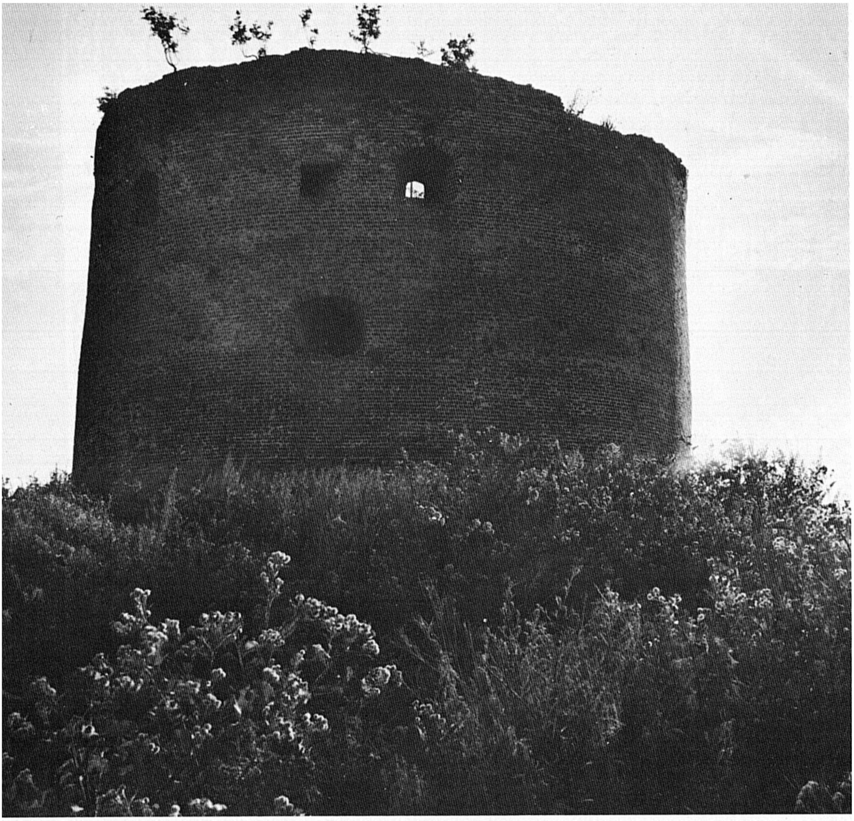
43

Calvary cross. 1359
Novgorod Museum of History,
Architecture and Art

44

Omophorion of Patriarch
Nikon. 17th century
On the ends, views of
the Moscow Kremlin and
the Novgorod Detinets.
Novgorod Museum of History,
Architecture and Art





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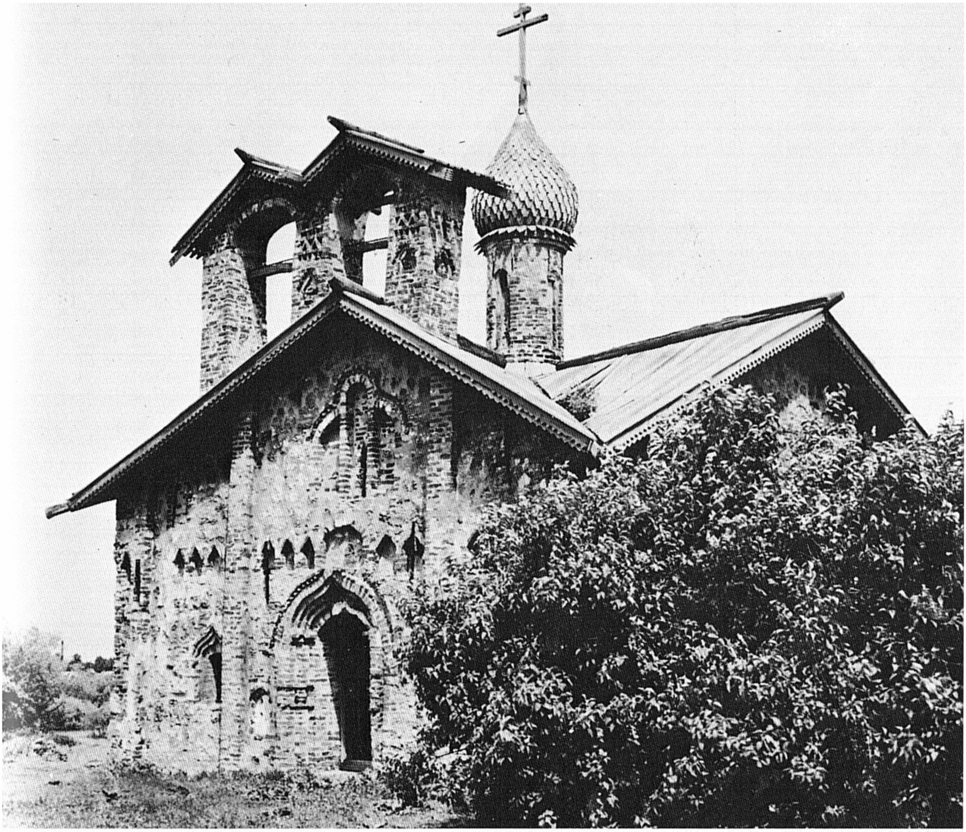
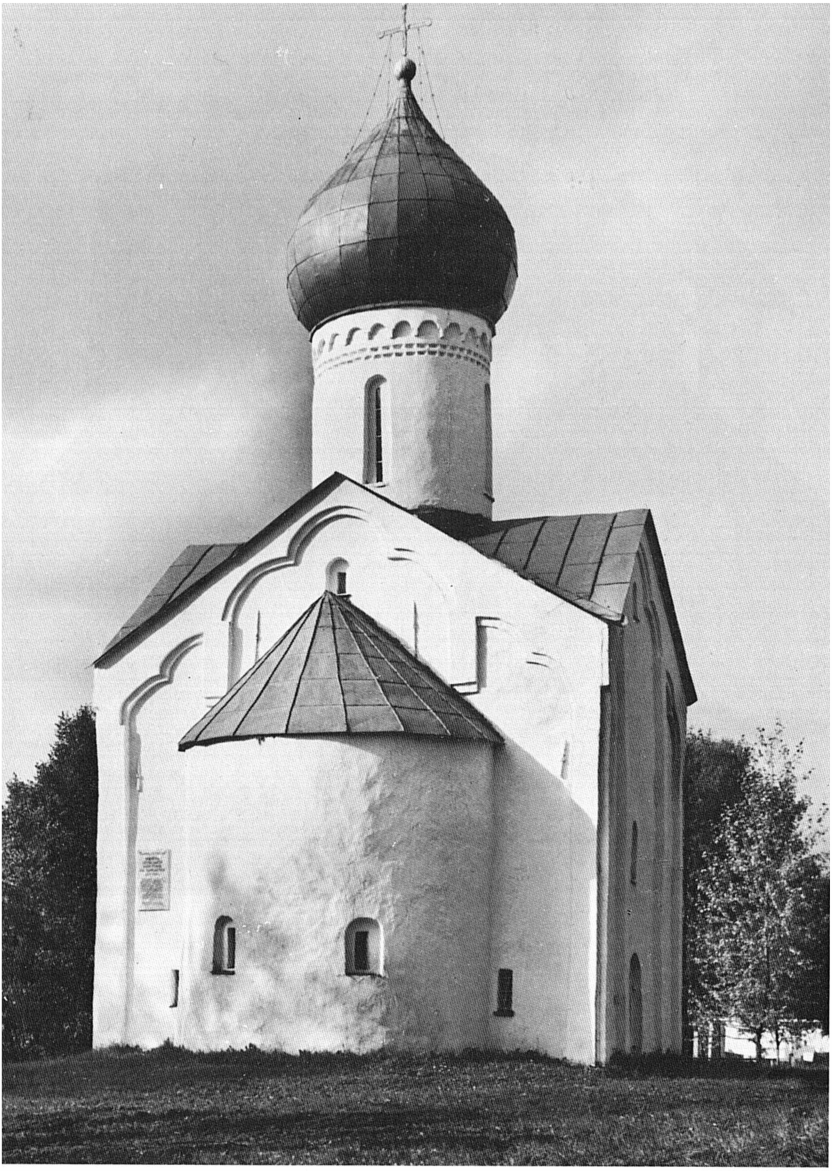
The White (St Alexius's)
Tower. 16th century



46

The Church of
St John the Almsgiver. 1422



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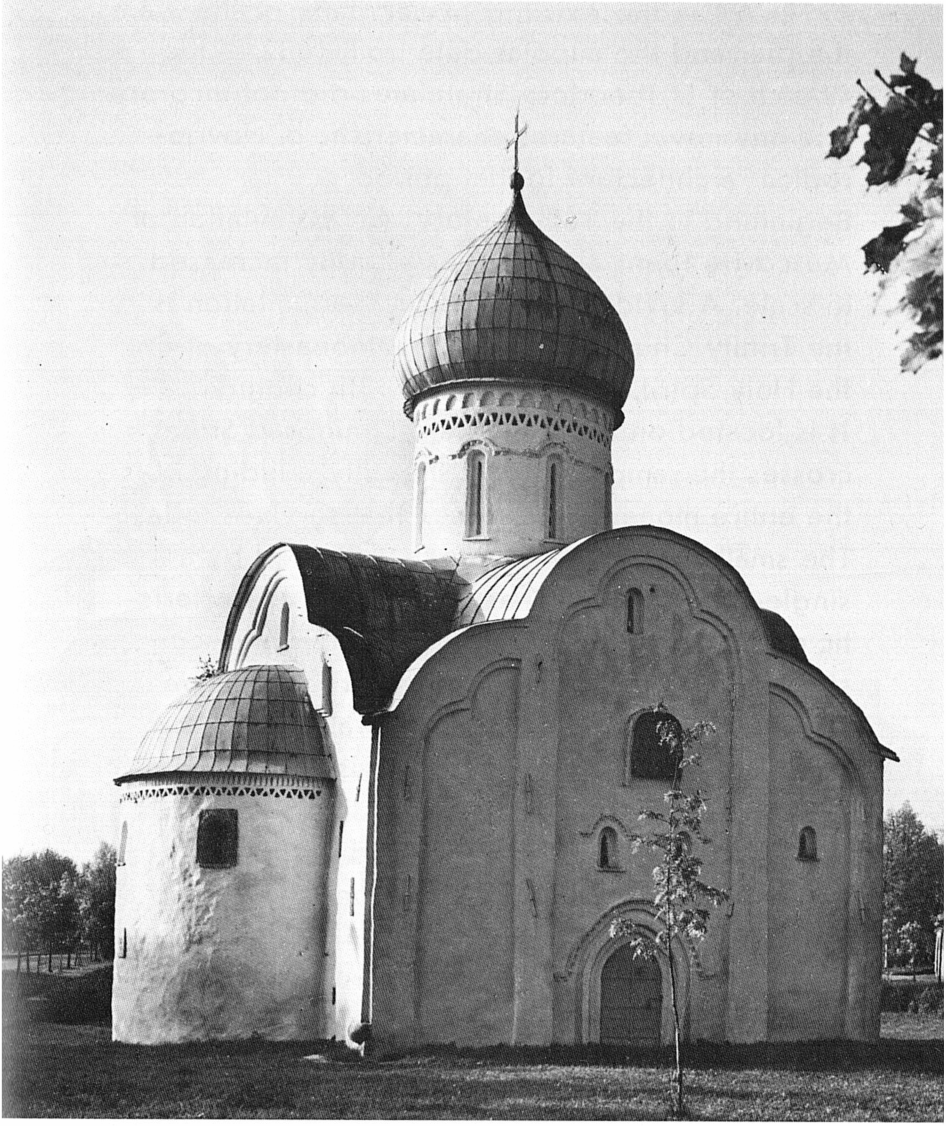
The Church of the
Twelve Apostles. 1454



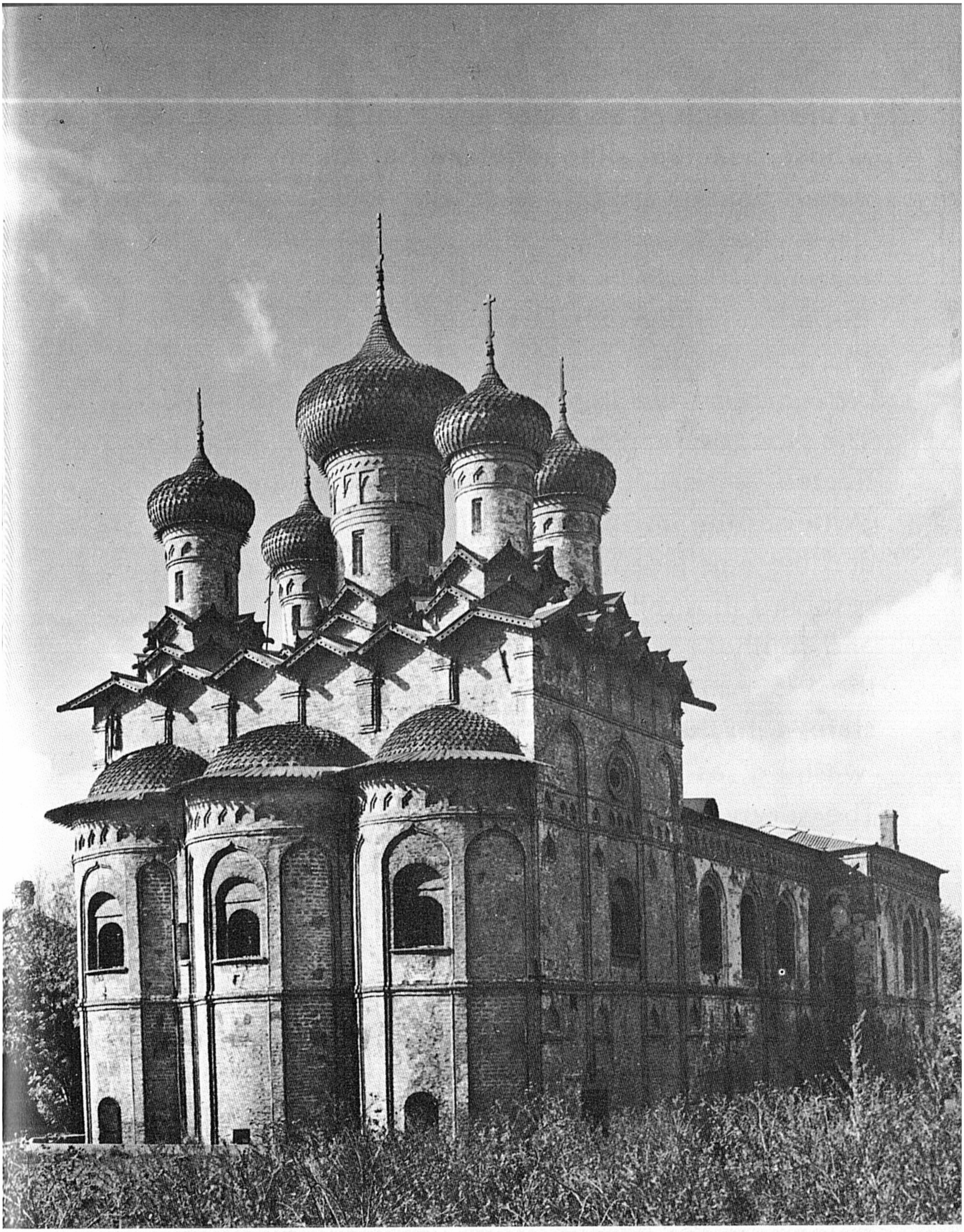
48

The Church of St Blaise. 1407

to this saint in the Market Side). Erected in 1292—94 — the existing upper parts of the walls, the pier and the cupolas date from 1682 — the Church of St Theodore Stratelates did not incorporate any novel features characteristic of Novgorodian architecture in that period.

Beginning in the 16th century, the assimilation of Muscovite forms and devices steadily increased in scale. A vivid example of such assimilation is the Trinity Church (1557) of the Monastery of the Holy Spirit, founded in the 13th century. It is located on the site where Leningrad Street crosses the rampart. This is the only building of the entire monastery complex that survives today. The small two-storeyed church, adjoined by a single-pier refectory, has three apses characteristic of Moscow temples, a double-pier inner construction, quite unusual for Novgorod, and five cupolas, instead of one. The central dome is provided with four windows. The lavish, rather intricate decor of the blind drums includes two rows of pediments; the façades abound in detail but only the double-stepped pentagonal niches are a tribute to Novgorodian tradition. The Trinity Church exemplifies the type of structure in which features common to Russian architecture as a whole prevail over Novgorodian ones.

Beyond the remains of the rampart, on the left bank of the Volkhov (to the left of the bridge),



49

The Trinity Church of the
Monastery of the Holy Spirit.
About 1557

is the Church of Sts Peter and Paul (1406), whose beautiful silhouette can be equally well seen from any side. In olden times, this area was called Kozhevniki. A 16th-century cadastre states that most residents of the adjacent streets engaged in tanning leather. The church is among the most illustrious examples from the heyday of Novgorodian architecture.

The Novgorodian architect's rational thought is reflected in the different decoration of the façades. Whereas the north façade giving on the rampart and the east façade overlooking the Volkhov are resolved in a rather modest manner, the western and southern walls profuse in decor. During the 1950s the monument was restored to its original state, with the walls left without stucco and whitewashing, as they used to be in the 15th century. The surviving 16th-century icons from this church are exhibited at the Novgorod Museum of History, Architecture and Art.

North of the Church of Sts Peter and Paul lay the princely sporting grounds, the *zverinets* (warren), first mentioned in chronicles of the 11th century. Later, the Zverin Monastery and the Monastery of St Nicholas the White were founded on these grounds.

The Church of St Nicholas the White (1312—13) belongs to the earliest stone urban buildings of the post-Mongol period, with a fairly typical

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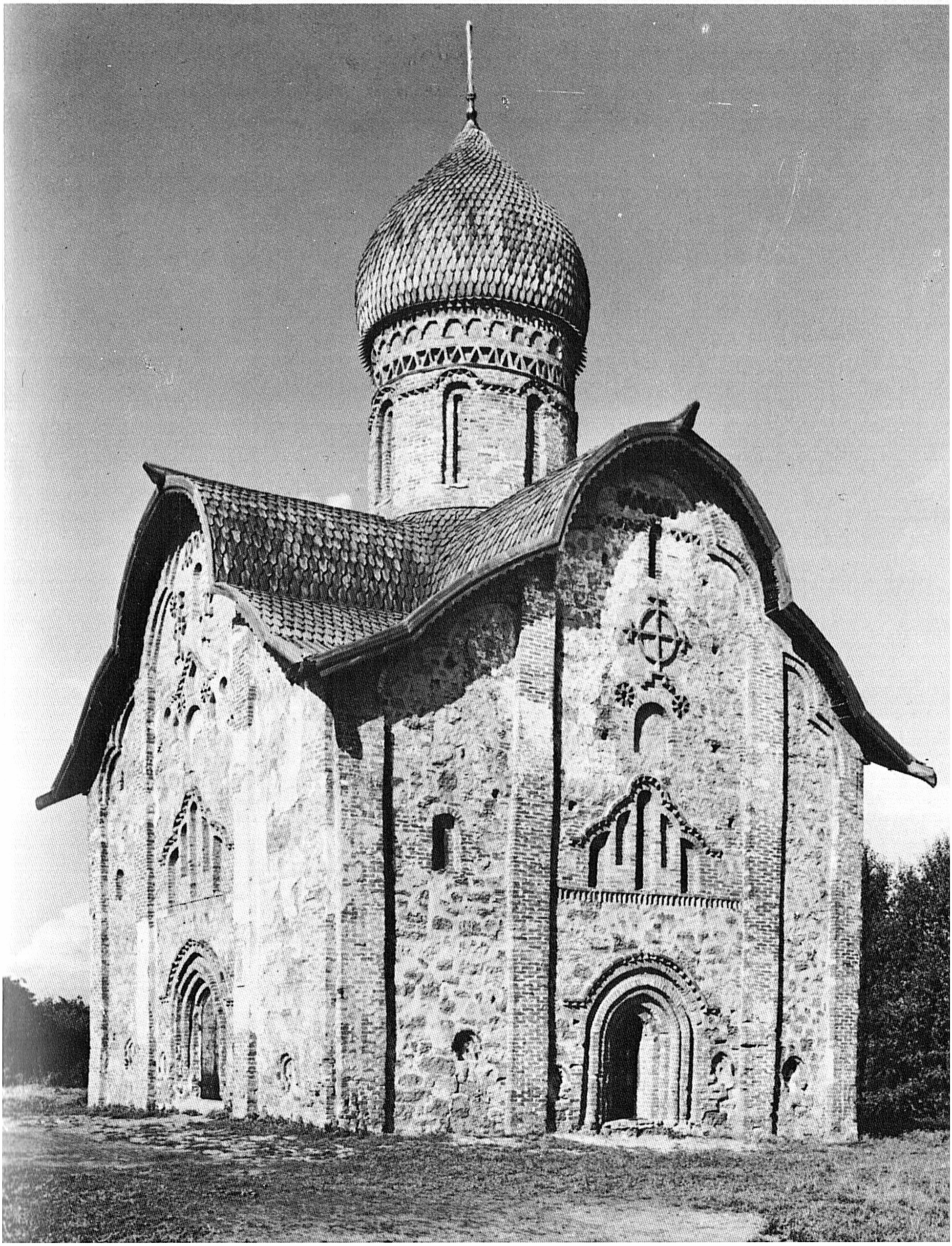
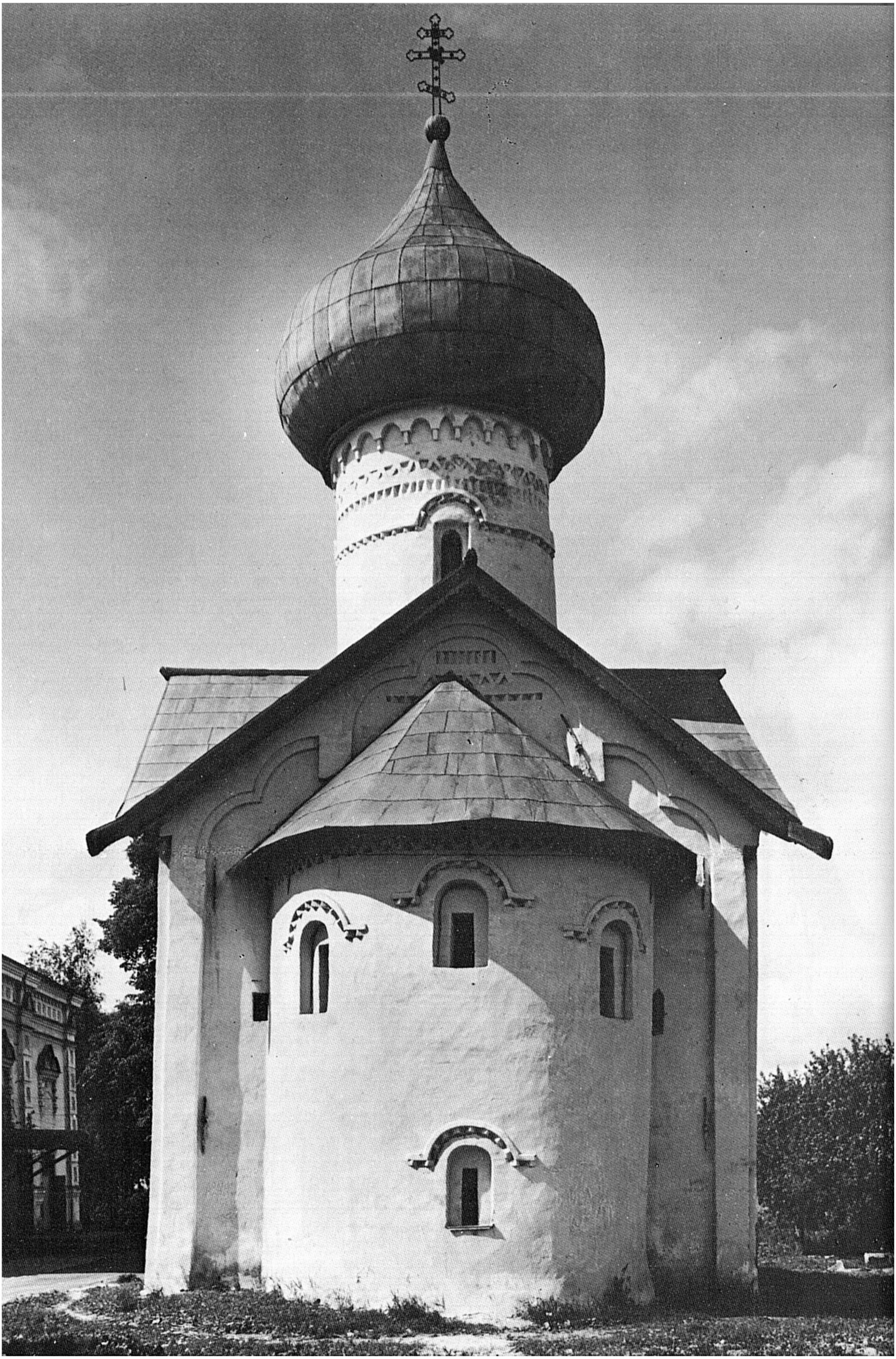
The Church of Sts Peter and Paul-in-Kozhevniki. 1406





Novgorodian architectural scheme of four piers, one dome and one apse.
The existing buildings of the Zverin Monastery include the considerably remodelled stone Church of the Intercession (14th century) and the Church of St Simeon the God-Receiver (1467) contemporaneous with and very similar to the Church of the Twelve Apostles. Extant inside St Simeon is the entire ensemble of fresco painting which, along with the frescoes of the Church of St Sergius of Radonezh in the Detinets, is a rare example of late Novgorodian monumental painting.

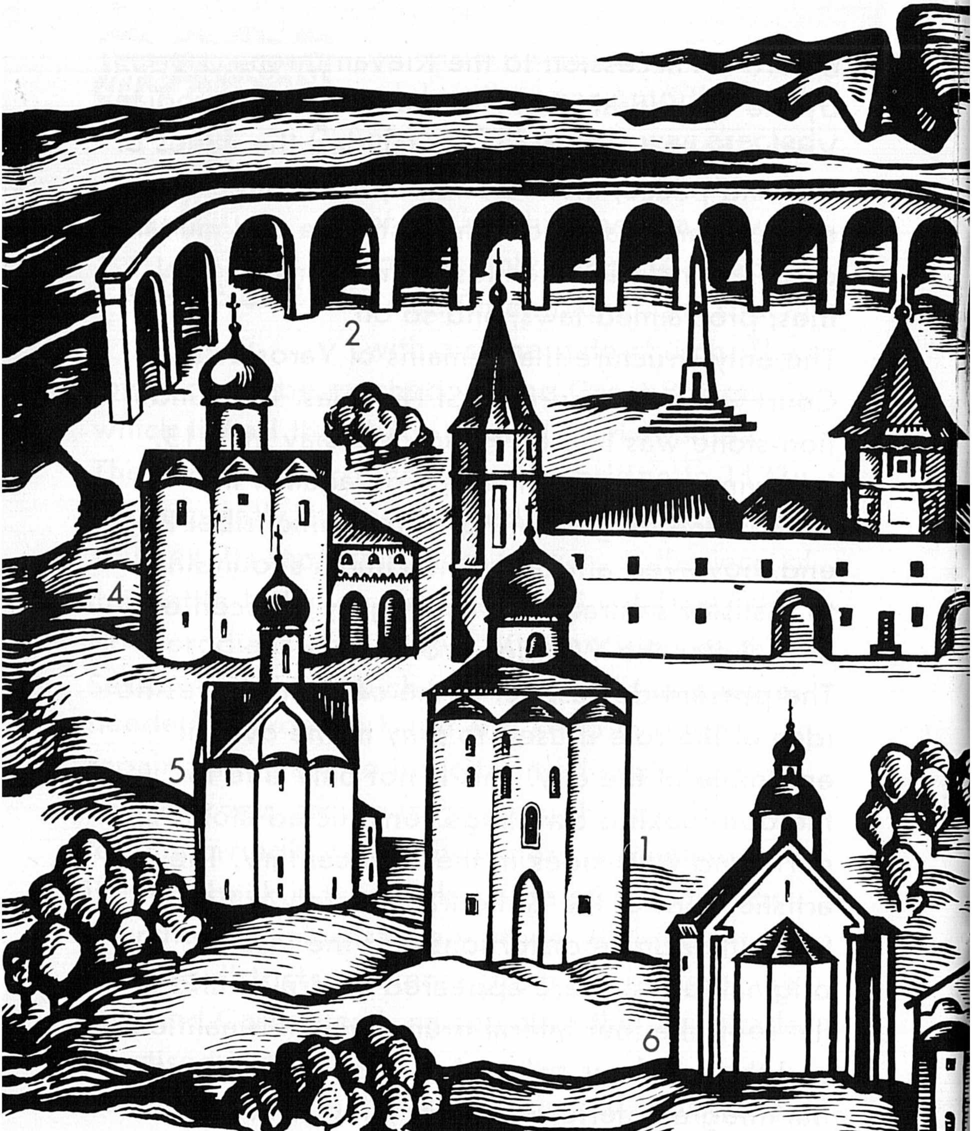
51
The Church of St Simeon the God-Receiver in the Zverin Monastery. 1467

The eastern barbican of the citadel wall opens onto the bank of the Volkhov. It was erected in the 19th century on the site of the Prechistenskaya Tower (of the Holy Virgin)— the tall, powerful and luxurious structure with a stone gate-church. The tower could be reached via the Great Bridge which linked the St Sophia and Market Sides. The chronicler first mentions the bridge in 1133. Subsequently, it was referred to in various written sources. Its representation appears in the icon of the Battle between the Men of Suzdal and the Novgorodians and in that of the Vision of the Sexton Tarasius. Much skill and boldness were needed in order to build and keep in good repair a structure so huge by medieval stanards. The Volkhov, a river large enough and of character, unhurriedly carries its waters. Sprawling on its right bank is the Market Side with numerous churches. Administratively, it was divided into two big districts, Slovensk (from the name of the hill) and Carpenters', named after the main trade practised in the district.

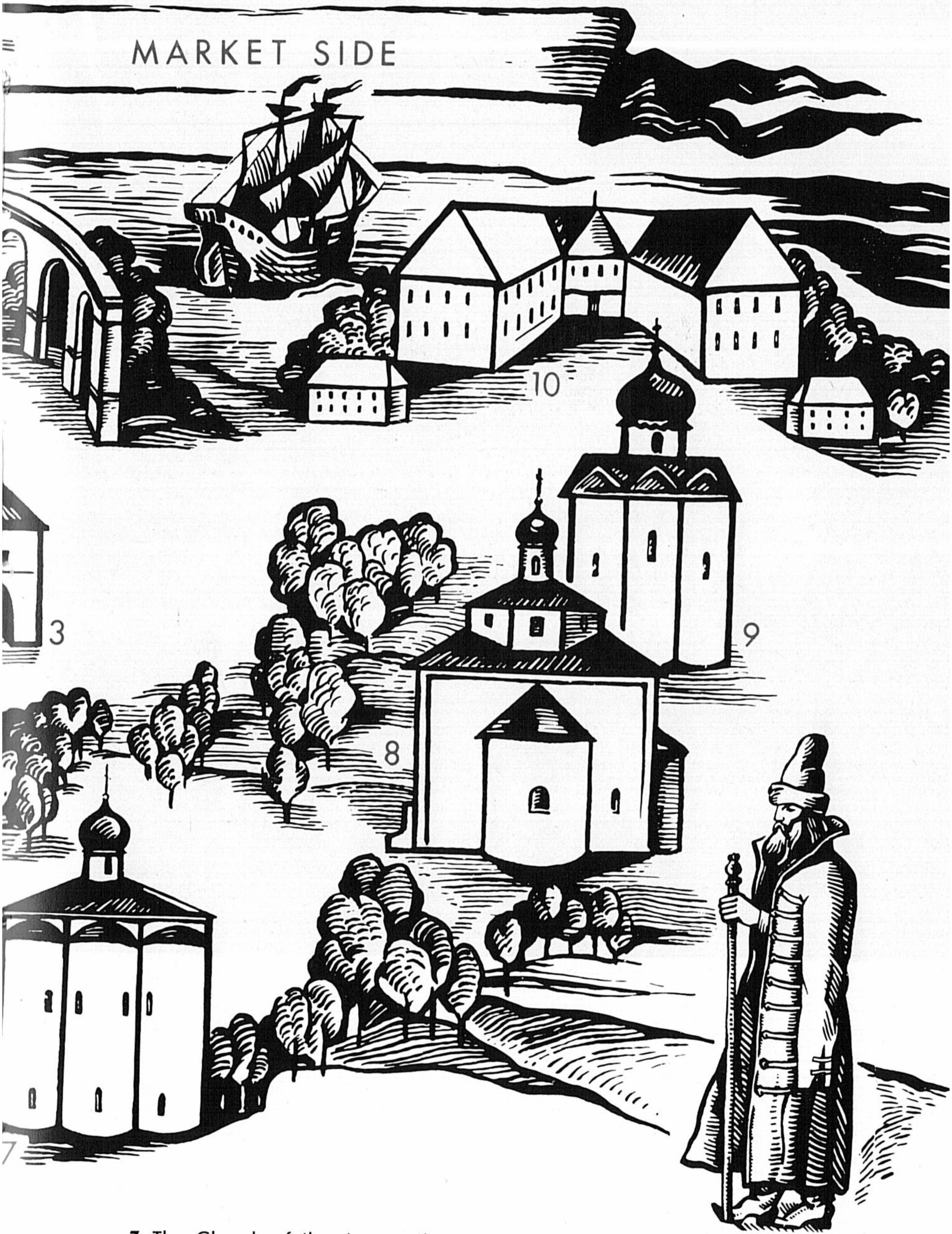
In the south district was the princely court, also known as Yaroslav's Court, from the name of Yaroslav the Wise who ruled Novgorod for a number of years in the early 11th century before his accession to the Kievan throne. Here, by the Cathedral of St Nicholas, the Novgorodian Veche held its meetings. It decided the issues of war and peace, invited and expelled the prince, elected candidates for administrative and military offices, concluded treaties with other principalities, proclaimed laws, and so on.

The only structure that remains of Yaroslav's Court is the Cathedral of St Nicholas. Its foundation-stone was laid by Prince Mstislav in 1113, following a successful campaign against the Tchuds, the neighbouring Ugro-Finnic tribe. Legend, however, attributes the church's founding to Mstislav's miraculous healing by the icon of St Nicholas the Wonder-Worker.

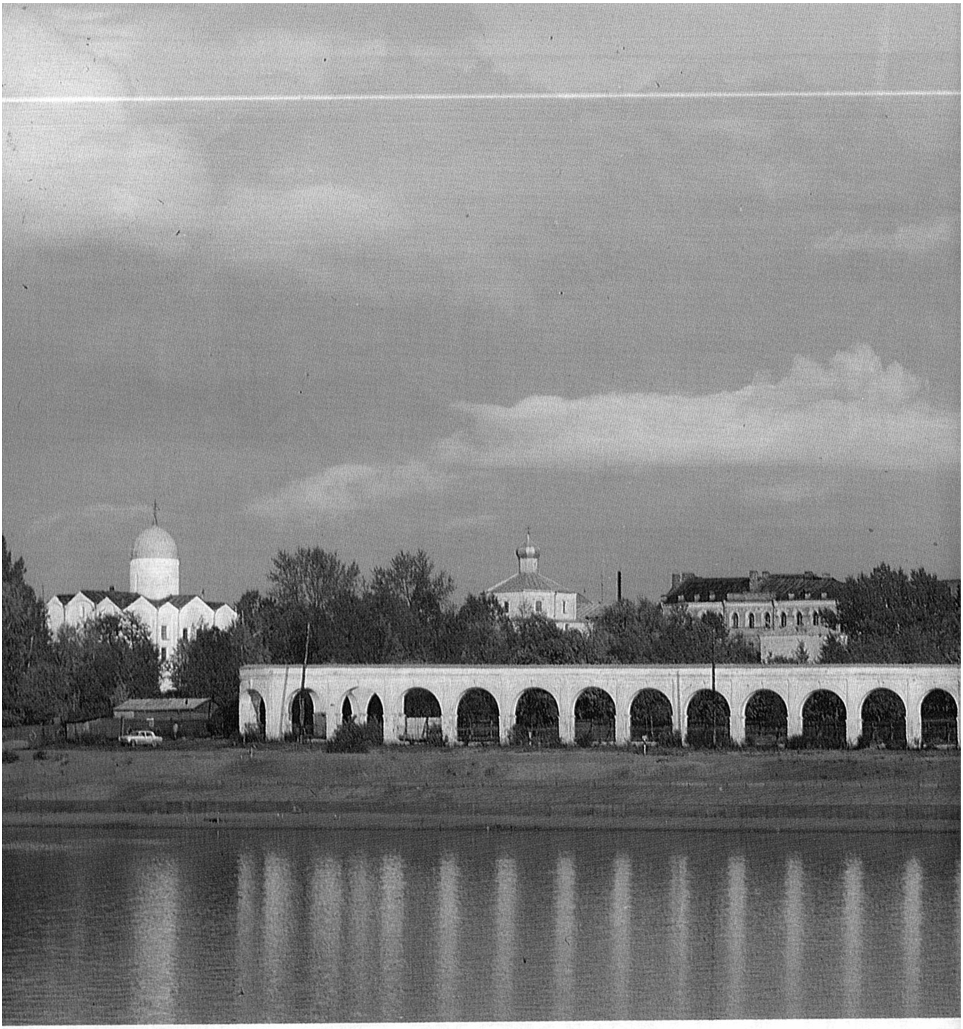
The present-day aspect of the cathedral gives no idea of the role it used to play in the overall ensemble of the city. This is not only due to the dull-looking dwellings constructed along its north and west sides in the 19th century. The artistic merit of the cathedral severely suffered from unfortunate distortions and the loss of original forms; there appeared a cornice and a flat roof, the four lateral drums were dismantled and the windows splayed or sealed off. The initial integral interior changed out of all recognition, and is now divided into two floors. Like St Sophia in the Detinets, St Nicholas was the centrepiece of the Market Side.



1 The Cathedral of St Nicholas.
2 The Arcade of the Gostiny Dvor.
3 The Gate-tower of the Gostiny Dvor.
4 The Church of the Holy Women.
5 The Church of St Procopius.
6 The Church of St Parasceve Piatnitsa.



7 The Church of the Assumption
in the Market Place.
8 The Church of St George in the Market Place.
9 The Church of St John-on-the-Opoki.
10 The building of the former Palace for Transient Guests.



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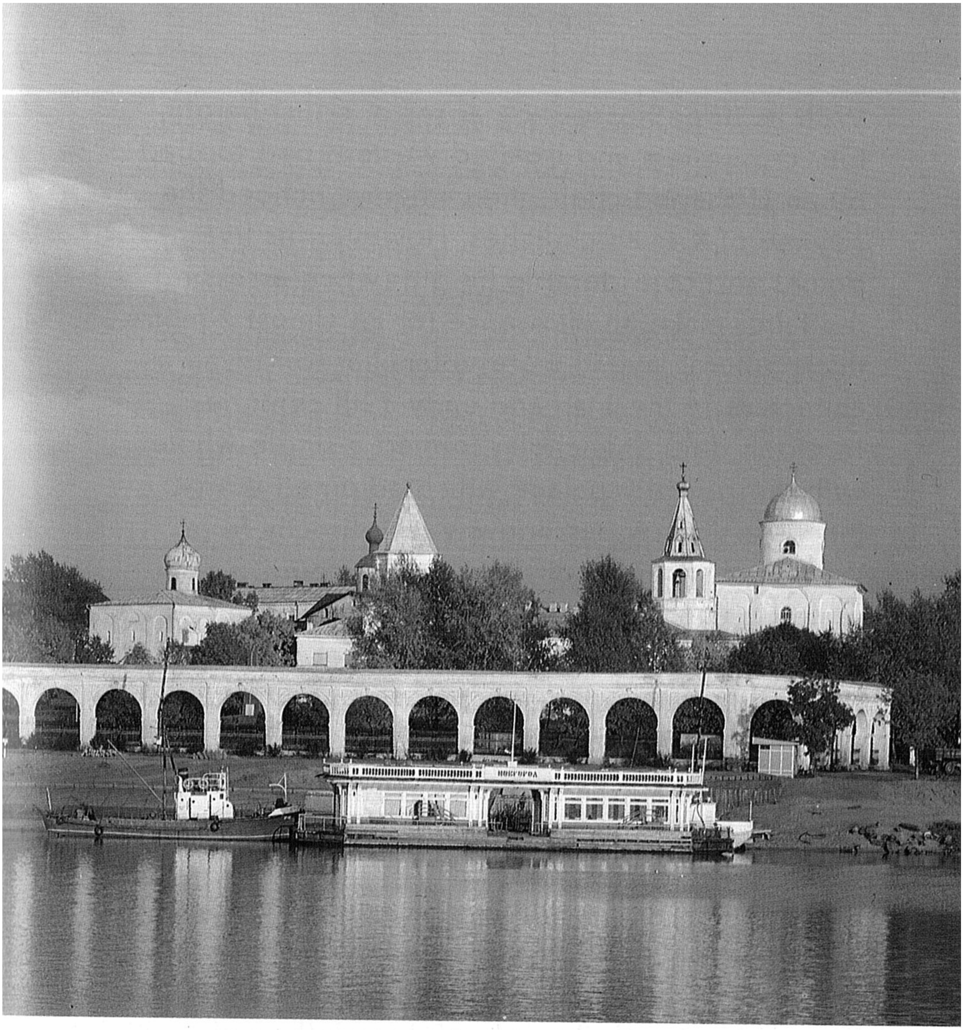
Yaroslav's Court and
the Market Place


НОВГОРОД

With its three horse-shoe apses of equal height, four cross-piers and isolated western part topped by an U-shaped choir, the cathedral echoed the scheme of Kievan churches. However, its five domes and considerable height (when assessing the latter make an allowance for an almost 2-metre thick cultural layer!) were unfamiliar to Kievan architecture in the 11th and early 12th centuries.
In olden days St Nicholas formed a single whole with the princely palace which adjoined it on the west side. A passageway led directly from the palace to the choir (the wall opening is now sealed off). In the 12th and early 13th centuries, for some unclear reason, a stair-tower was constructed in the south-western corner of the cathedral. Its remains can still be seen in the crypt.
Also in the crypt the viewer's attention is usually arrested by the largest surviving fragment of the fresco *Job's Wife*. It depicts Job smitten with boils, sitting on the smouldering ruins outside the city walls (only part of the figure survives), and his wife feeding him from a pole. The proportions of her head, the colourful modelling of the countenance without the use of conventional highlights characteristic of the Novgorod school of icon painting, and the classically clear facial features reveal an affinity with the frescoes of St Sophia's in Kiev. On the walls nearby are the remains of ornamental painting and a small frag-

ment of the composition *A Rich Man in Hell*, which was part of the Last Judgment. In the cathedral's upper section, small fragments of frescoes are seen in the eastern piers, the central apse and the window bevellings. There is a carved wooden iconostasis of the 18th century with a number of cleaned and restored icons of the 16th and 17th centuries. The ancient, frequently restored icon of St Nicholas, whose round form is unusual for Old Russia, is exhibited in the Novgorod Museum of History, Architecture and Art.

Located on the cathedral's western side is a complex of buildings put up at different times. Opposite the cathedral entrance is a tent-roofed bell-tower, erected on a hexahedral foundation in the 17th century. Next to it, on the north, is a 19th-century structure which, in turn, is adjoined by a massive tent-roofed tower with two passageways below. This tower, constructed not later than the 15th century, was long believed to house the Veche Bell. Recent investigations, however, have shown that it was the gate-tower of the Gostiny Dvor (bazaar) designed by Semion Yefimov and Gury Vakhrameyev at the end of the 17th century. Together with the arcade stretching along the Volkhov's right bank, it is the only reminder of the former Gostiny Dvor.

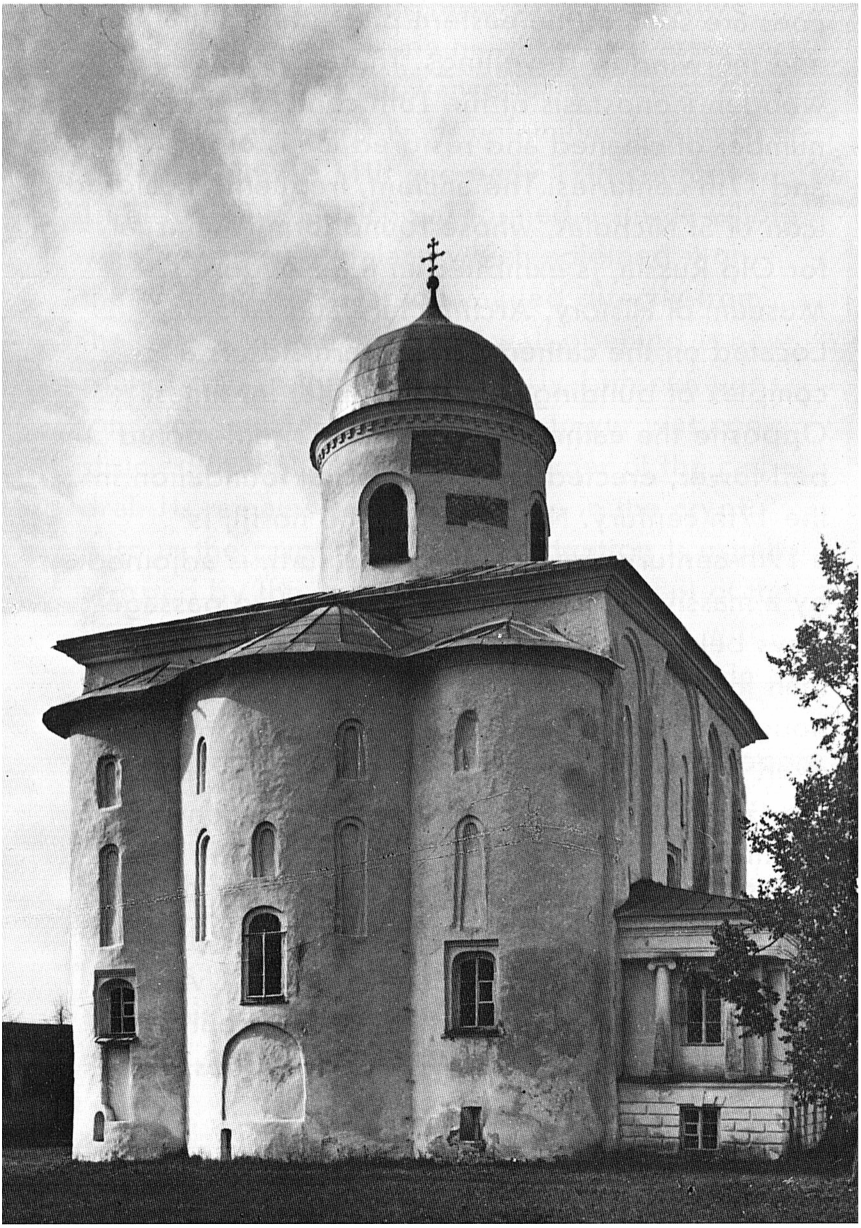
In the northern vicinity of the princely court lay the Market, the hub of Novgorod's business life.

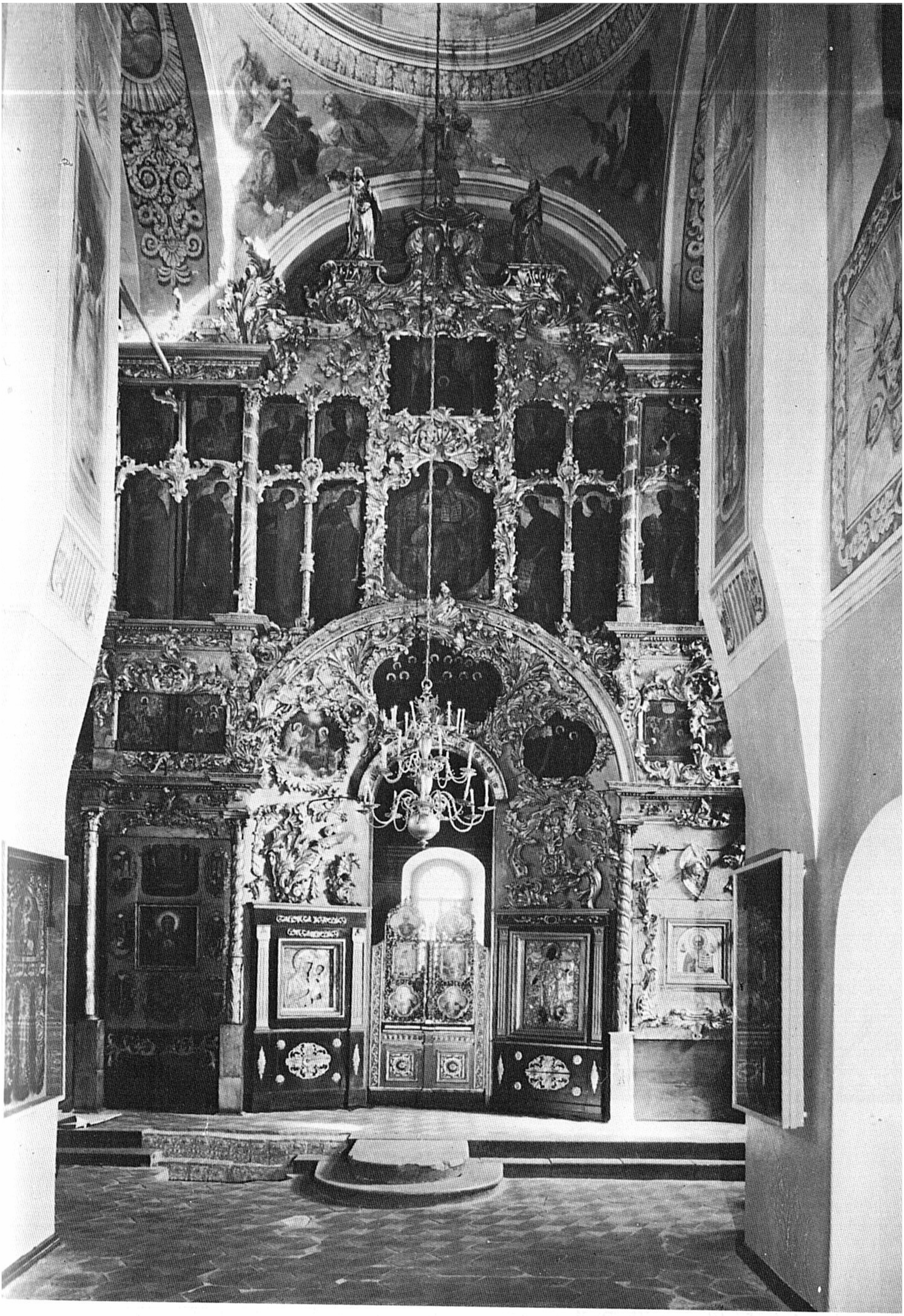
53

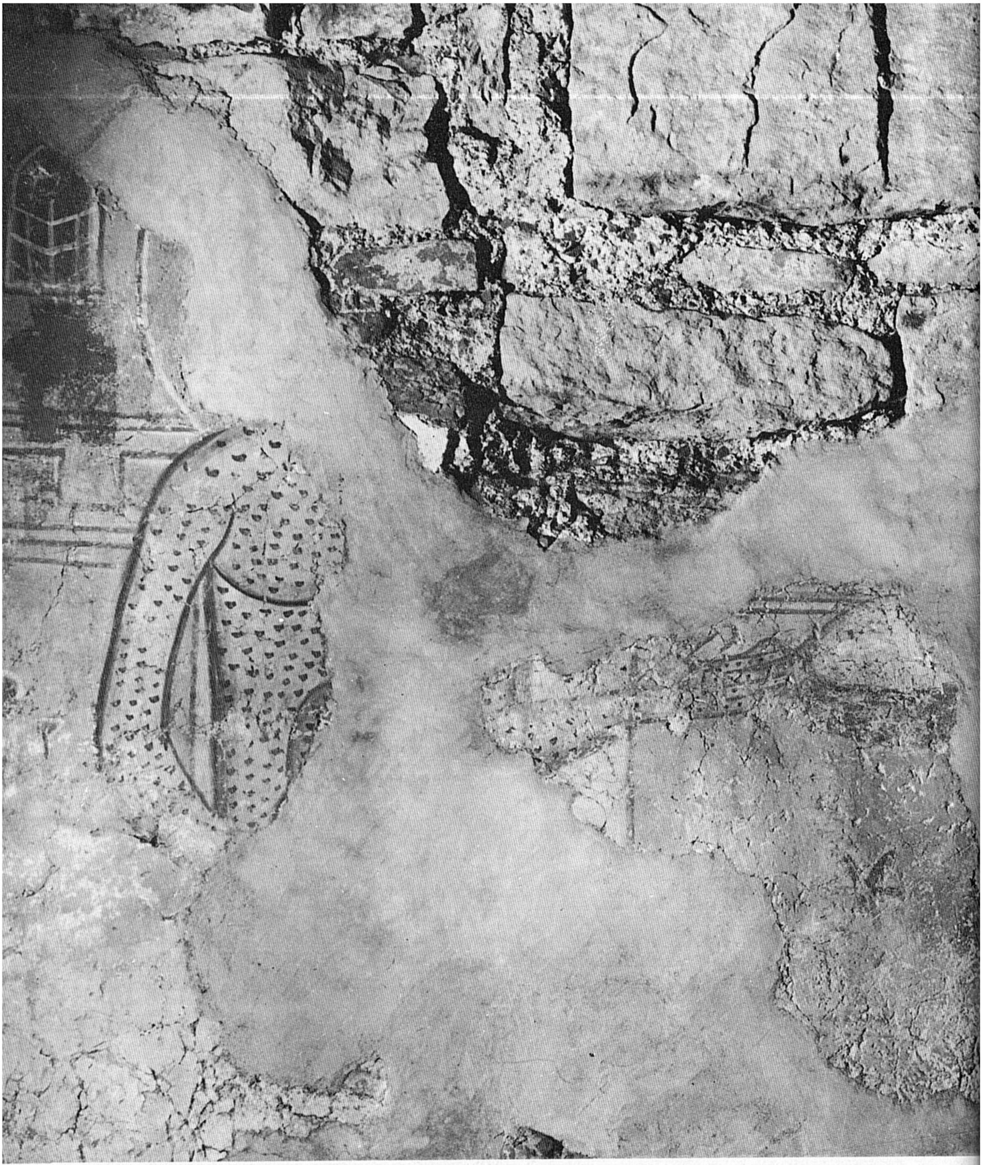
The Cathedral
of St Nicholas. 1113

54

The Cathedral
of St Nicholas. Interior







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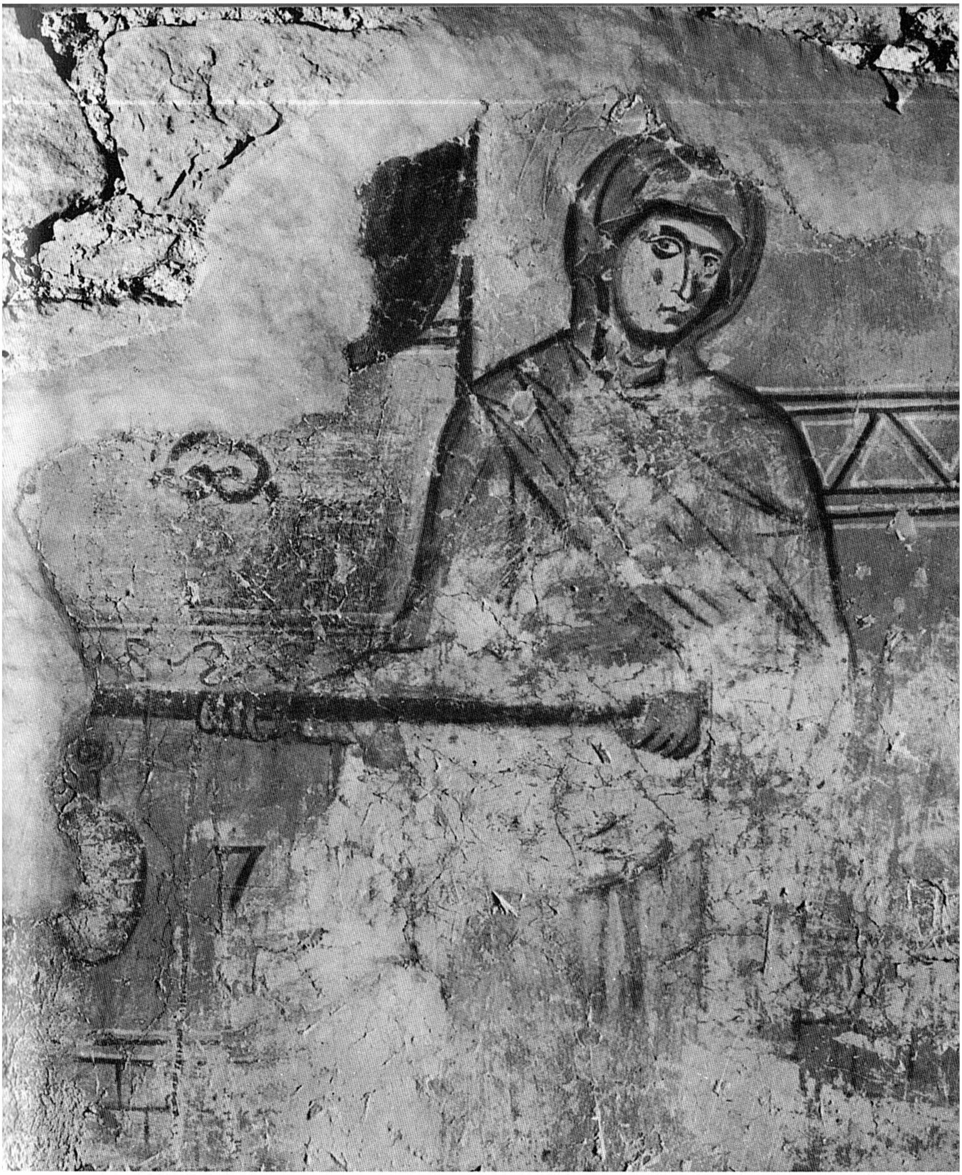
The Cathedral of St Nicholas.
Job Smitten with Boils
Fresco. 12th century



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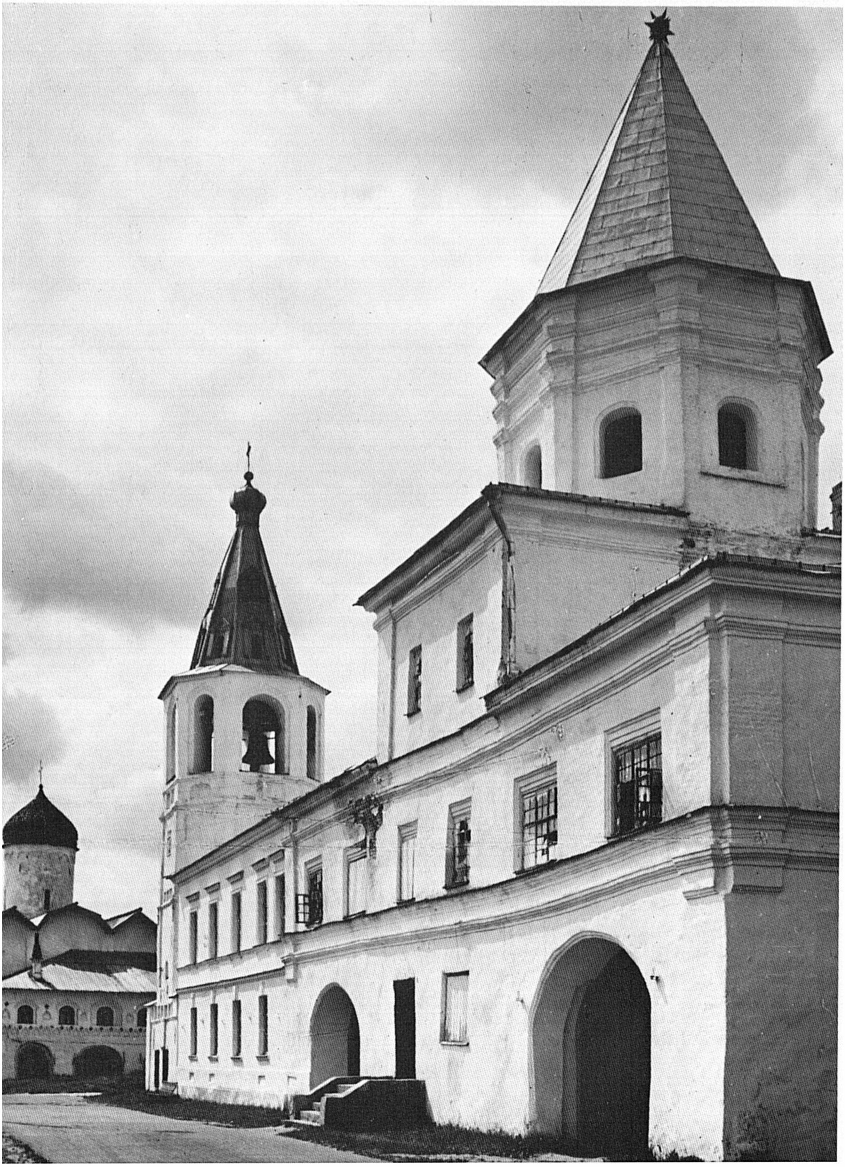
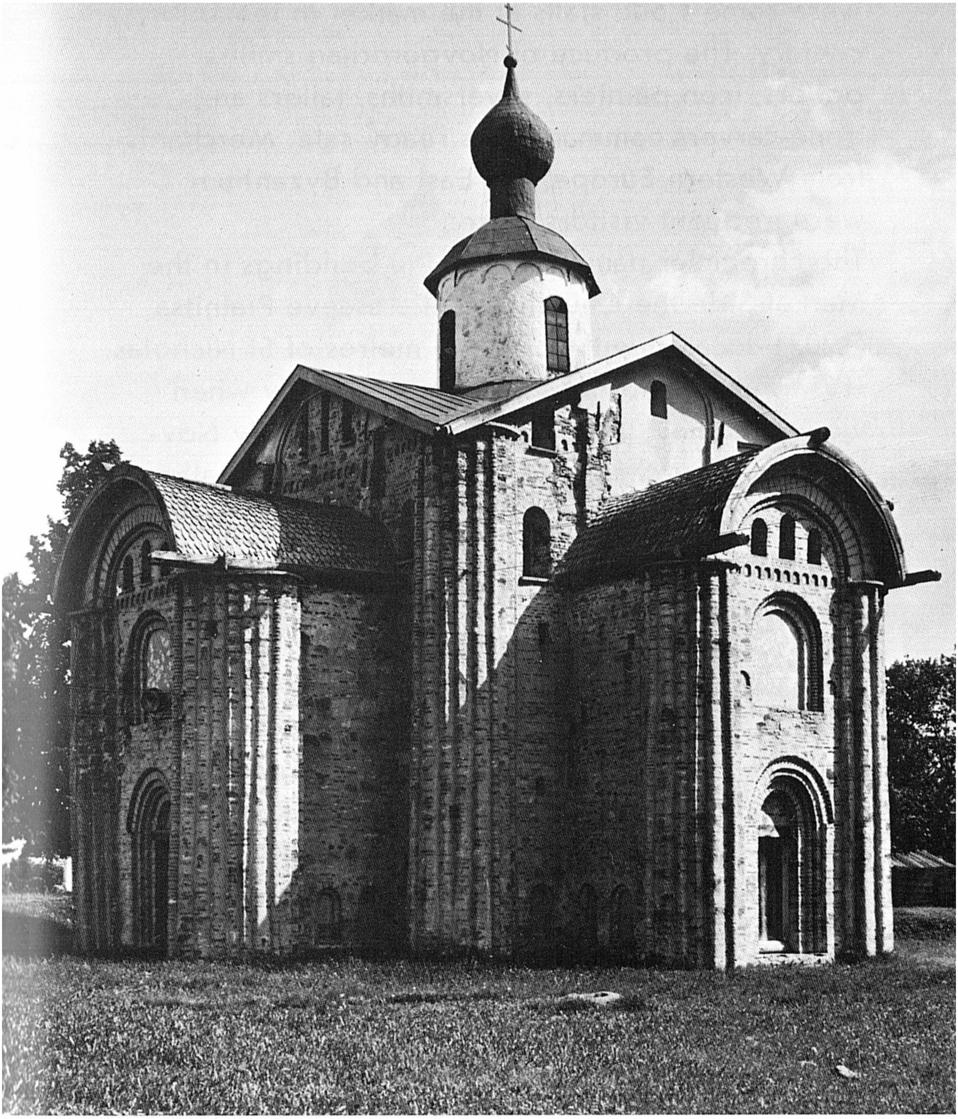
The Gate-tower (barbican) of the Gostiny Dvor in the Market Place
Late 17th century





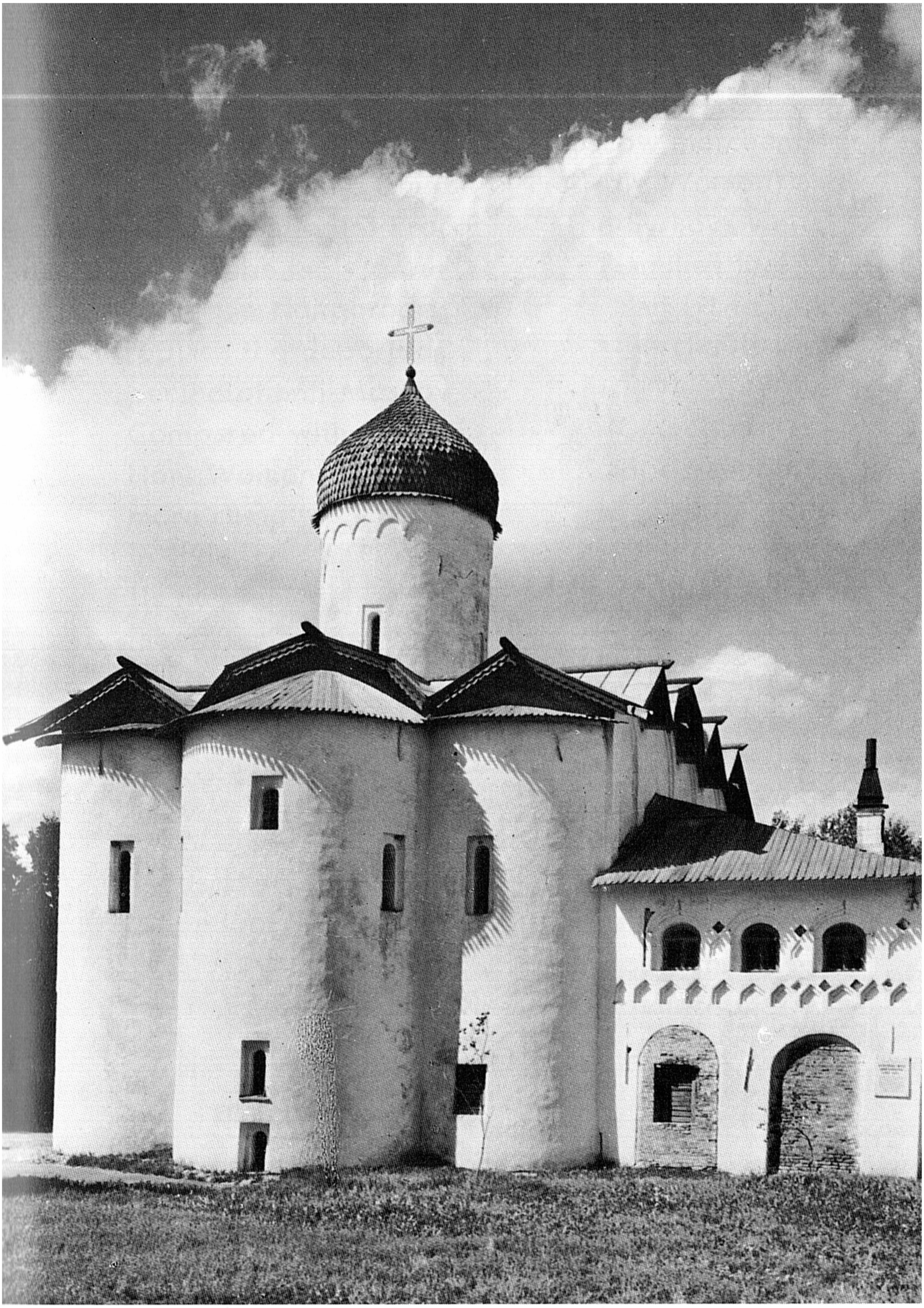
57

The Church of
St Parasceve Piatnitsa. 1207

Long rows of stalls extended as far as the river, terminating at the Great Row, or *riad*. There were some 1,500 stalls at the market in the 16th century. The produce of Novgorodian smiths, potters, icon painters, silversmiths, tailors and bone-carvers commanded a ready sale. Merchants from Western Europe, the East and Byzantium were frequent visitors there.

The chronicler names among the buildings in the Market Side the Church of St Parasceve Piatnitsa (1207), located within 30—40 metres of St Nicholas. It is a rather unusual structure, especially when viewed against the background of typically Novgorodian churches. This is largely due to a rather complicated treatment of its architectural volumes and inner space: no Novgorodian churches have the same rectangular form of the side apses, nor do they have three side-chapels as St Parasceve. In addition, its piers, round in cross-section, are likewise an extremely rare feature of 11th—13th century Russian architecture.

Two more buildings located near the cathedral — the Church of the Holy Women (1508—1511) and the Church of St Procopius (1529) — were erected on the sites of the wooden churches that were destroyed by the fire of 1508. They furnish a clue to the changes that took place in Novgorodian architecture after the city's unification with Moscow. It is worth mentioning that the construction



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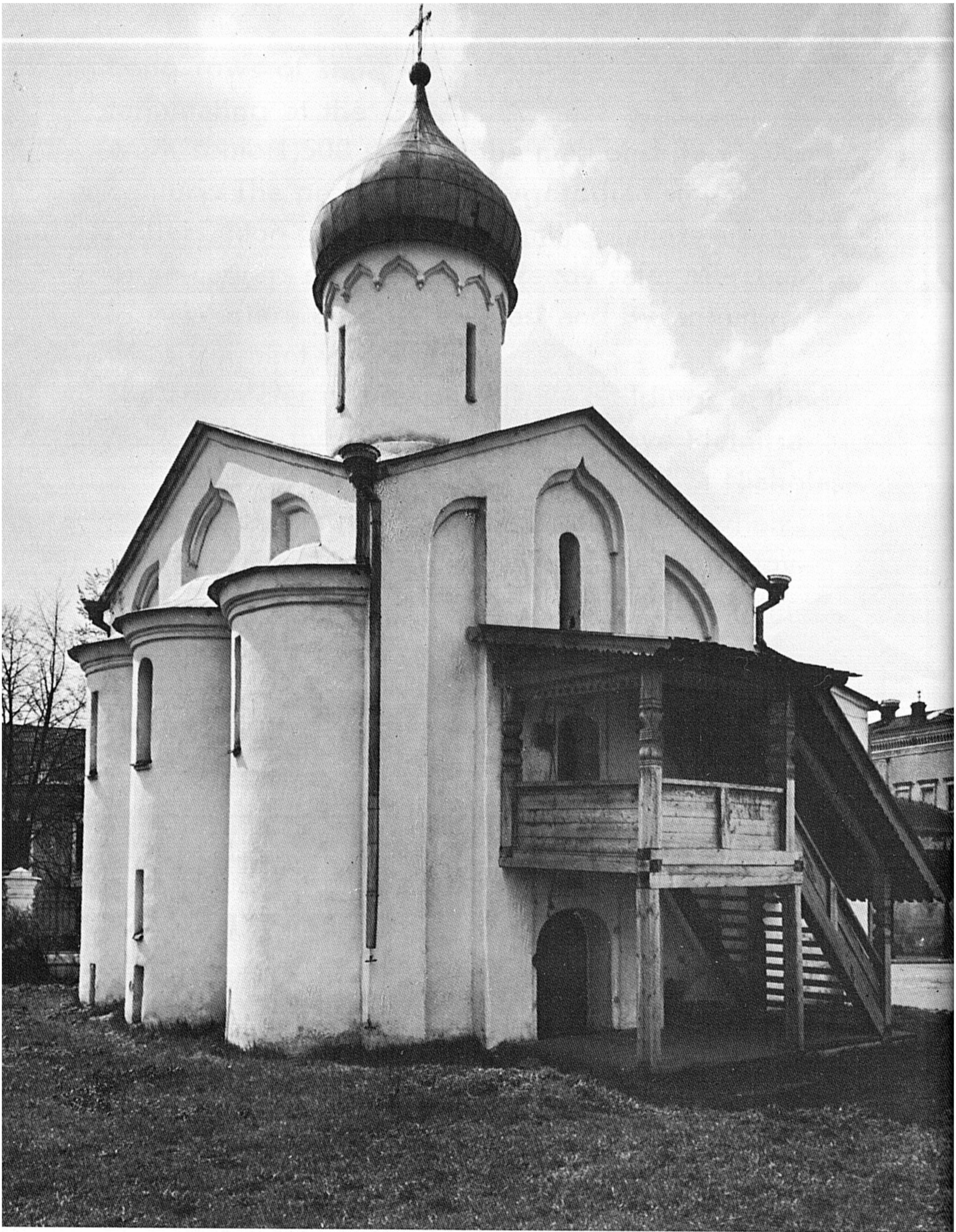
The Church of the
Holy Women. 1510



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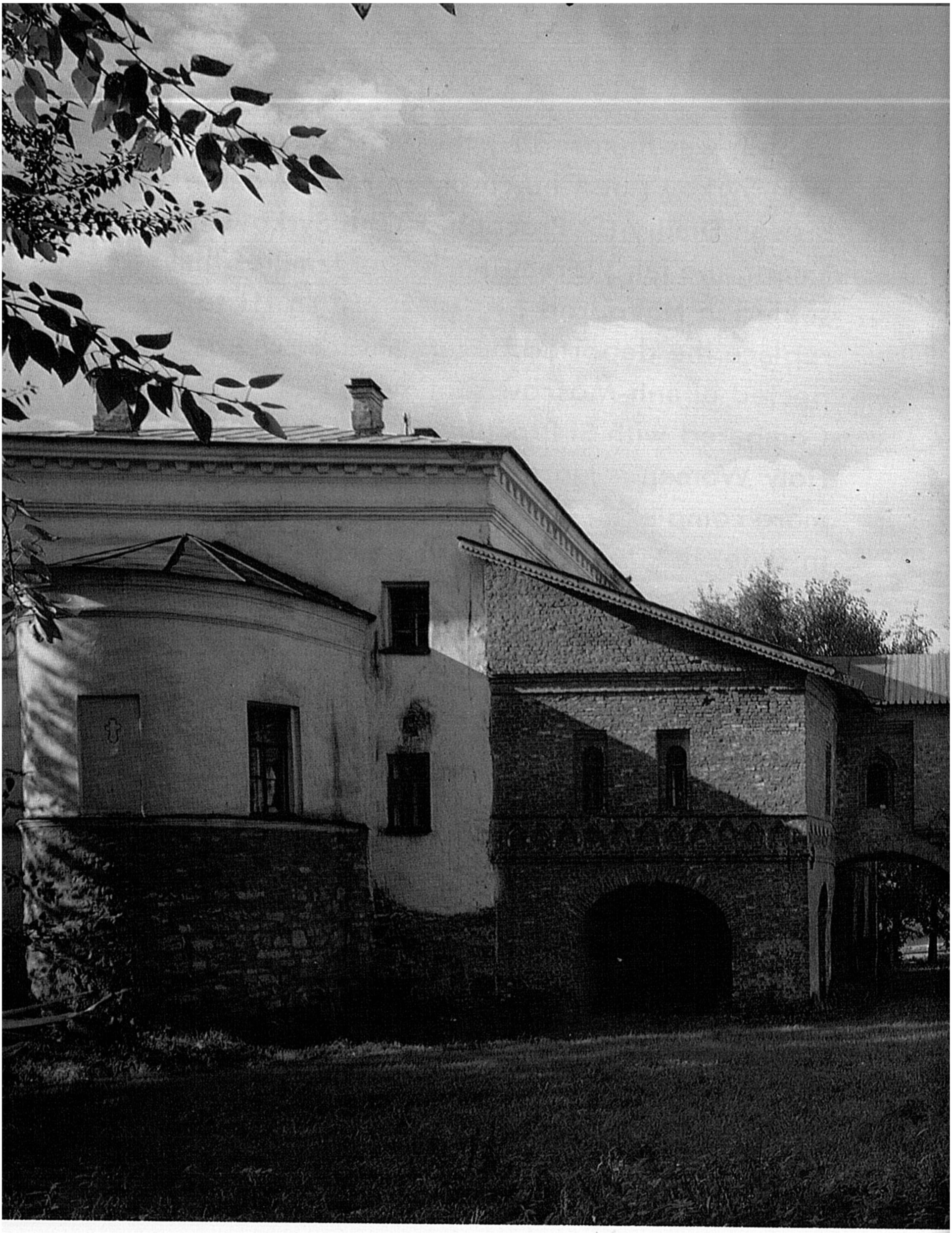
The Church
of St Procopius. 1529

of both was financed by the Moscow merchant Ivan Syrkov (the Church of the Holy Women) and his son Dmitry (St Procopius). The Syrkovs were among the fairly great number of families that settled in Novgorod by order of Ivan III to replace the deported boyars and merchants suspected of anti-Moscow sentiments.

Compared with St Procopius, the Church of the Holy Women is more massive in appearance, more complex in composition, and more archaic in style. It is a four-pier structure with galleries. Its northern gallery, decorated with small pentagonal niches and tiled insets, was constructed in the 1540s while the western narthex was added in the 17th century. The interior of the church is divided into three floors, of which the two lower were used as storerooms. Three wooden porches and the double-bay belfry of the western wall lent the building particular picturesqueness. Of interest is the combination of stone and wooden parts, different in colour and form.

St Procopius was undoubtedly modelled on the Church of the Holy Women and repeated, its composition and inner structure. The building is notable for its well-thought-out proportions and clear-cut, seemingly weightless drum.

In the southern part of the Market Side, on the way to Slavno, two churches form a small yet beautiful ensemble. One of them, that of the



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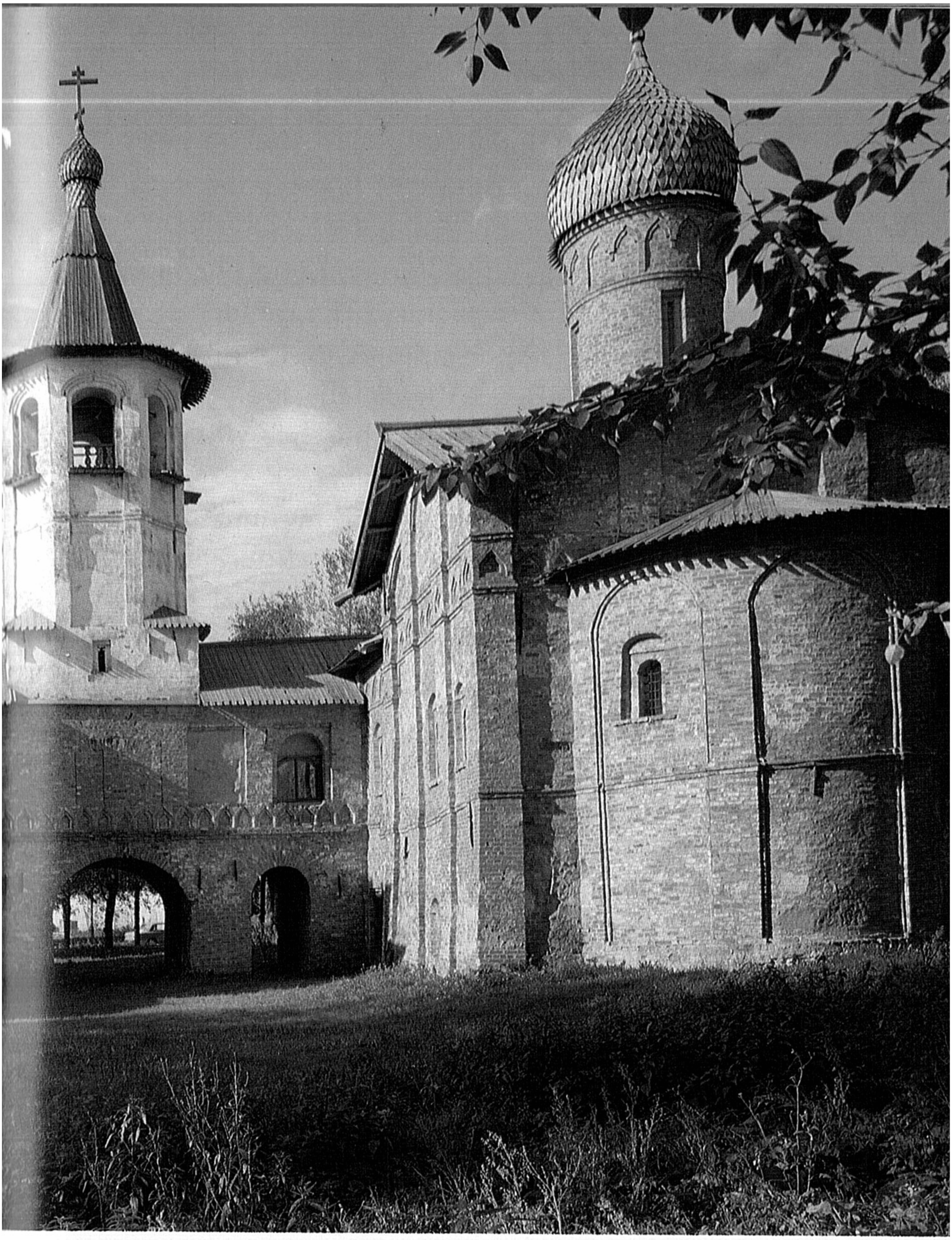
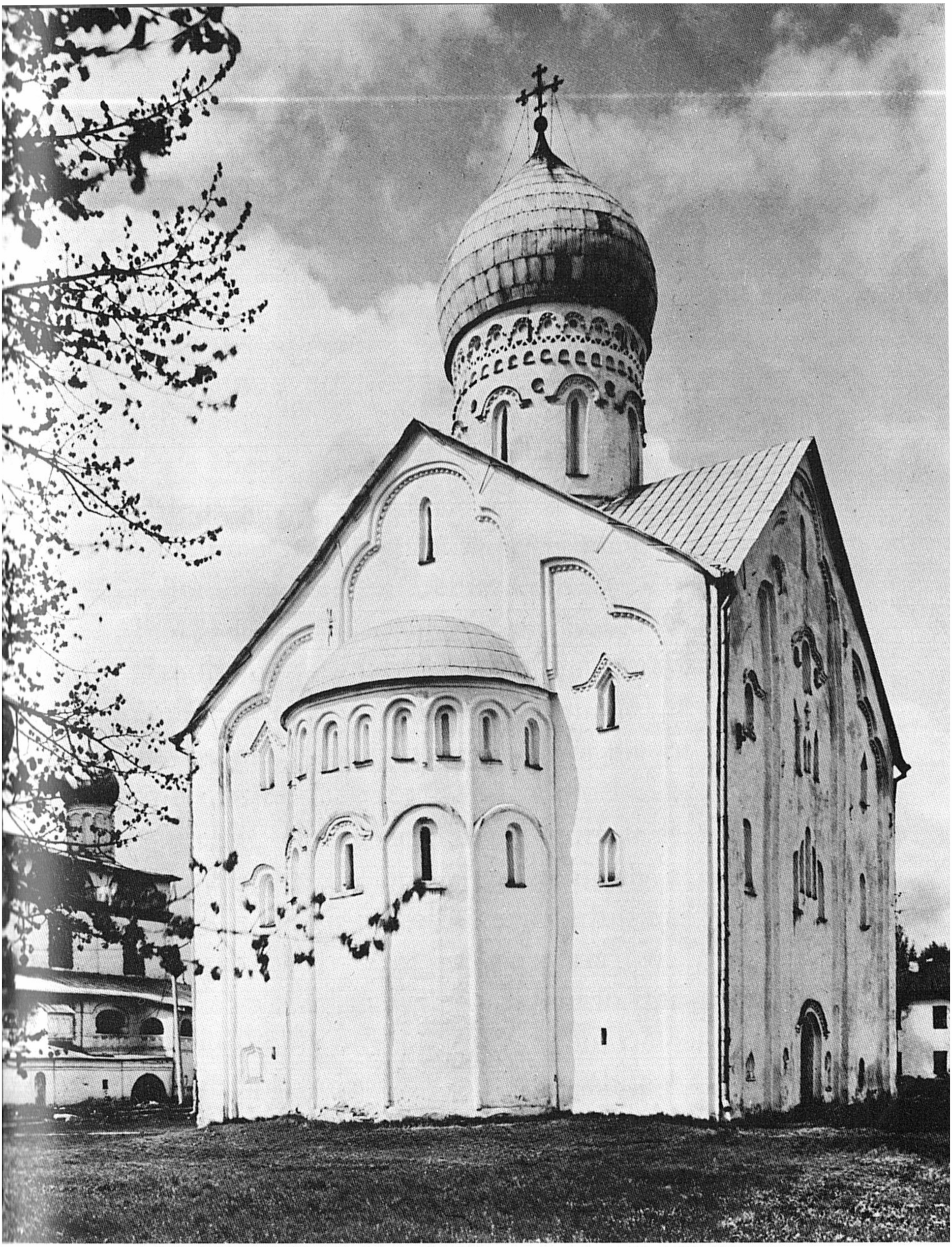
Ensemble of the churches
of the Annunciation and
of St Michael the Archangel.
14th—17th centuries



Archangel Michael, retains the lower parts of the walls of 1300. The second, that of the Annunciation, took its final shape in the 16th century. Both feature two-storeyed galleries, quite uncommon to Novgorodian architecture. The gallery of the Church of the Annunciation adjoins it at a right angle, not on three sides, as is usually the case. The bell-tower linking the churches was raised at the end of the 17th century.

One of Novgorod's most celebrated monuments is the Church of Our Saviour of Transfiguration-in-Elijah-Street (1374). Both in its architectural aspect and in its constructive techniques, the building has much in common with earlier and contemporaneous structures. Among the later additions is the eight-slope roof which replaced the three-pitched one in the 16th century. Characteristic of 14th- and 15th-century architecture, the latter echoed the overall construction of the building. Whereas the pilasters articulating the double-stepped form of the walls occur, though rarely, in Novgorodian architecture, the decoration of the façades sharply differs from the typically Novgorodian restrained decor. Executed with surprising freedom and ease, it features seemingly at random scattered windows, variously shaped niches and numerous crosses which, taken together, produce the sensation of a free equilibrium. At the same time, the tooth-edged bricks



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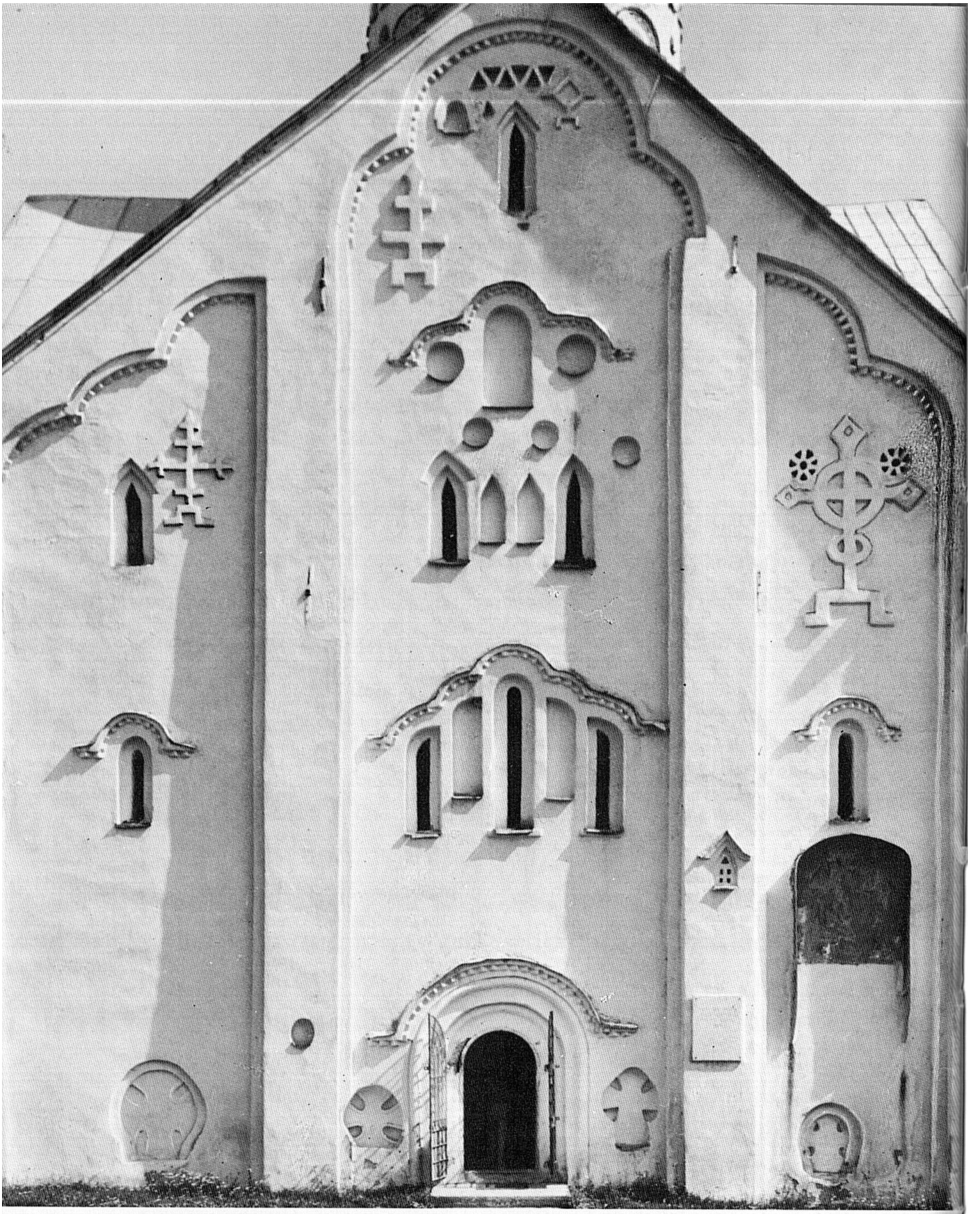
The Church of Our Saviour of the Transfiguration-in-Elijah-Street. 1374



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62

The Church of Our Saviour
of the Transfiguration-in-
Elijah-Street.
Southern façade

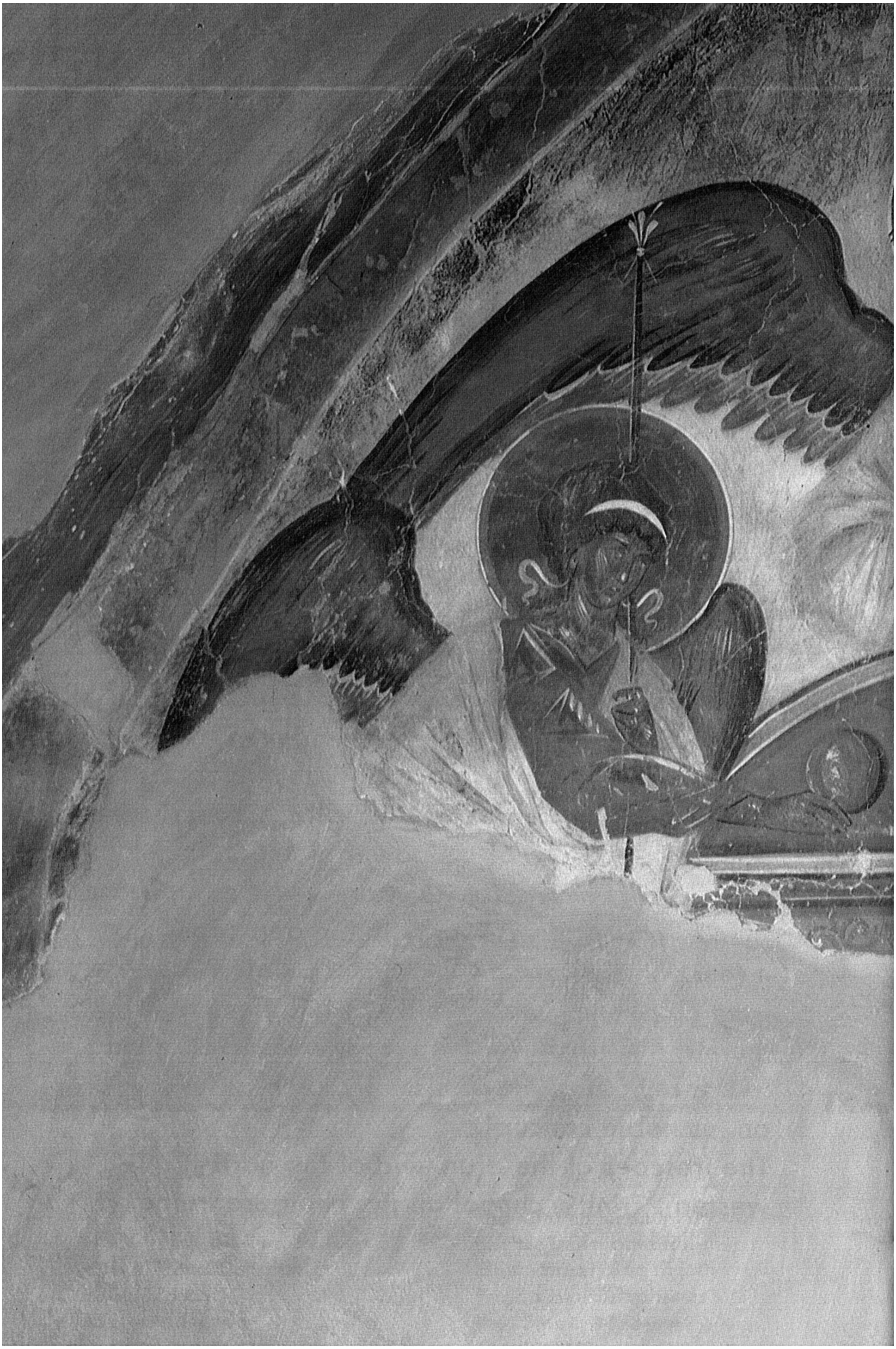
63

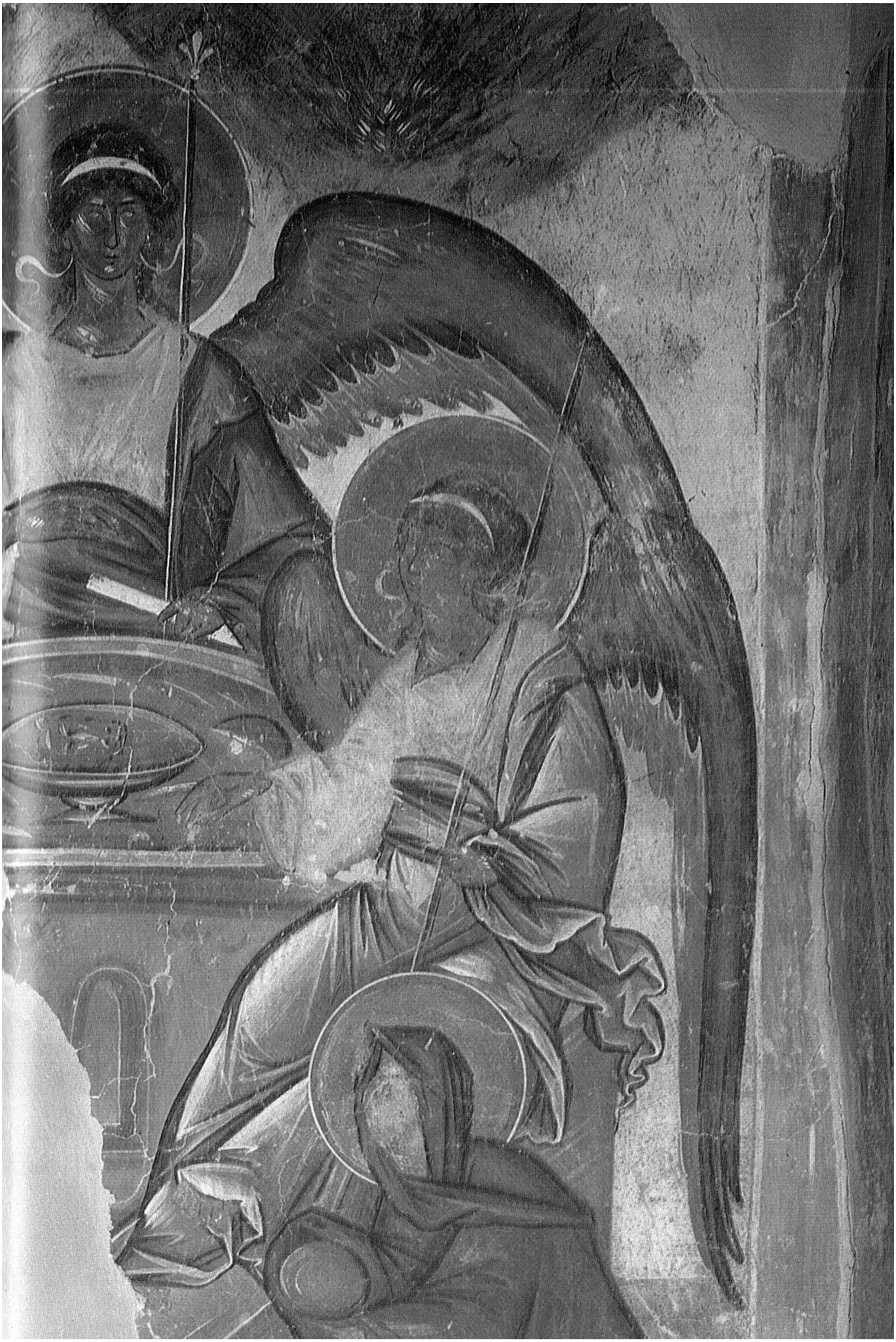
The Church of Our Saviour
of the Transfiguration-in-
Elijah-Street. *The Trinity*
Fresco by Theophanes
the Greek. 1378

accentuate the expressiveness of the multi-slope roof. The façades are decorated differently, depending on their importance. Especially lavish is the decor of the main, southern façade. In its regular pattern and strict symmetry the decoration of the drum seems to embody the calm unchangeability of the heavenly as contrasted to the transience of the earthly. However, the building's charm lies not in its individual forms, but in that harmonious fusion of all the components which makes the creation of a humble mason a genuine work of architecture.

In 1378 on the money of the boyar Vasily Danilovich and the men of Elijah Street, the church was frescoed by Theophanes the Greek. Its murals are all that remains of the great Byzantine master's legacy, who painted over forty churches. At the time of his work in Novgorod, Theophanes the Greek was a highly accomplished artist, in the prime of his powerful talent. Epiphanius the Wise, a contemporary writer, described him as a man of wisdom skilful in depiction, a real philosopher and a brilliant painter. Also from Epiphanius we learn that while painting the murals, the artist used to pace the scaffold, talking to the beholders, yet constantly keeping his mind on his noble concept.

The frescoes of the drum and of the north-western, Trinity, chapel on the choir are in the



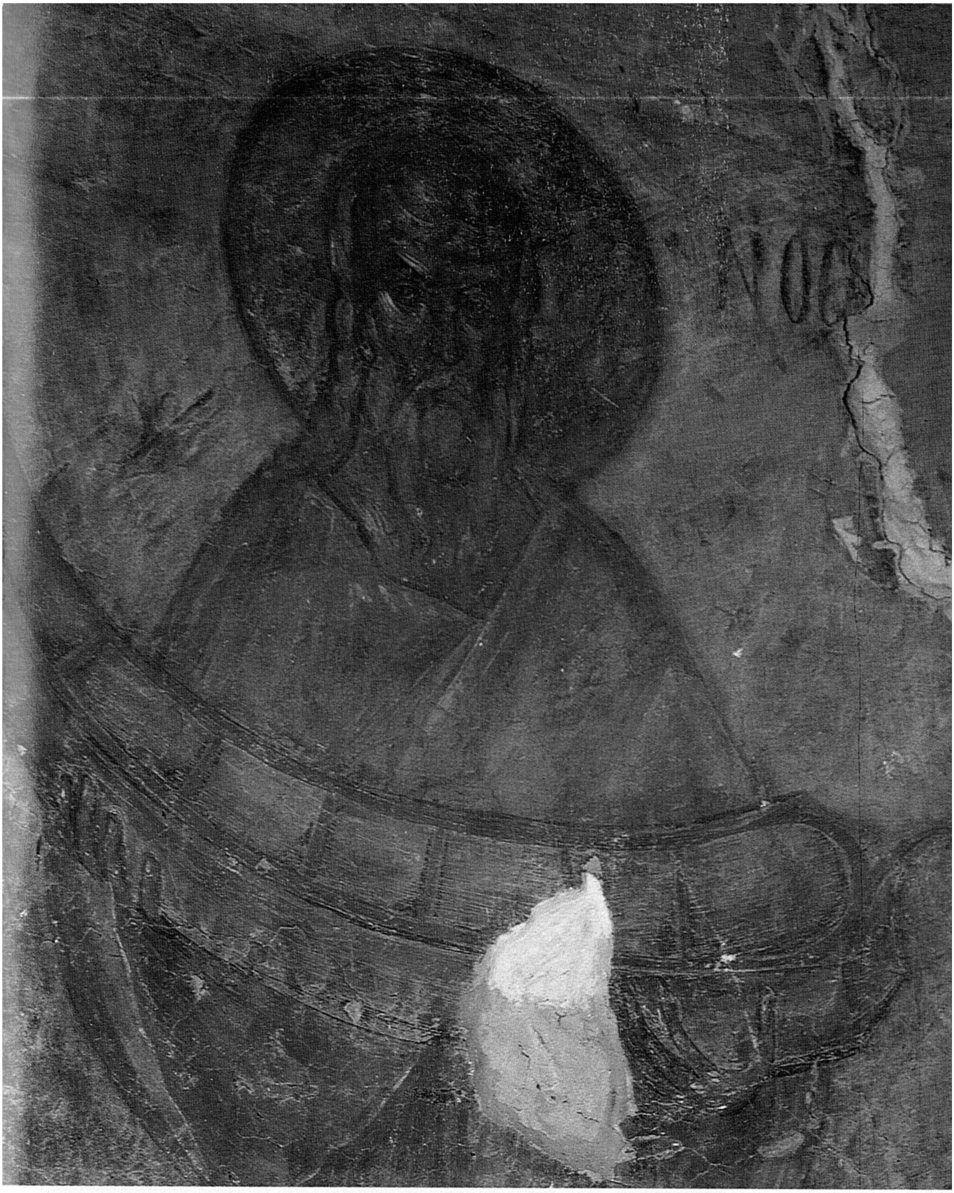


best state of preservation. The whole space of the dome is taken up by the magnificent figure of the Pantocrator; the frescoes of the partition-walls depict the Forefathers Noah, Melzhizedek and Seth. The image of the Pantocrator is one of a truly epic force. Even a brave, experienced man could not help trembling under his wrathful gaze. To the man of the Middle Ages the image of the punishing god reminded of the Last Judgment and retribution.

The key feature of all Theophanes's characters is that spiritual force, that inner flame which now softly illumines the faces of the wise Patriarch Noah and the angels of the Trinity, now furiously breaks through in the figures of the stylites. Stylites were recluses who, perched on pillars, used to spend days and nights in praying in the frantic belief that by mortification of their bodies they would ensure the salvation of the souls.

The Old Testament Trinity, beautifully matching the asymmetric form of the half-barrel vault, together with the stylites' figures are the focal points in the painting of the Trinity chapel.

Theophanes's was a highly distinctive style. His forte is the stroke applied on a black ground, retaining, as it were, the movement of his impetuous brush. By juxtaposing highlights of whiting with other colours, the artist was able to express the tragic duality of his subjects — the internal



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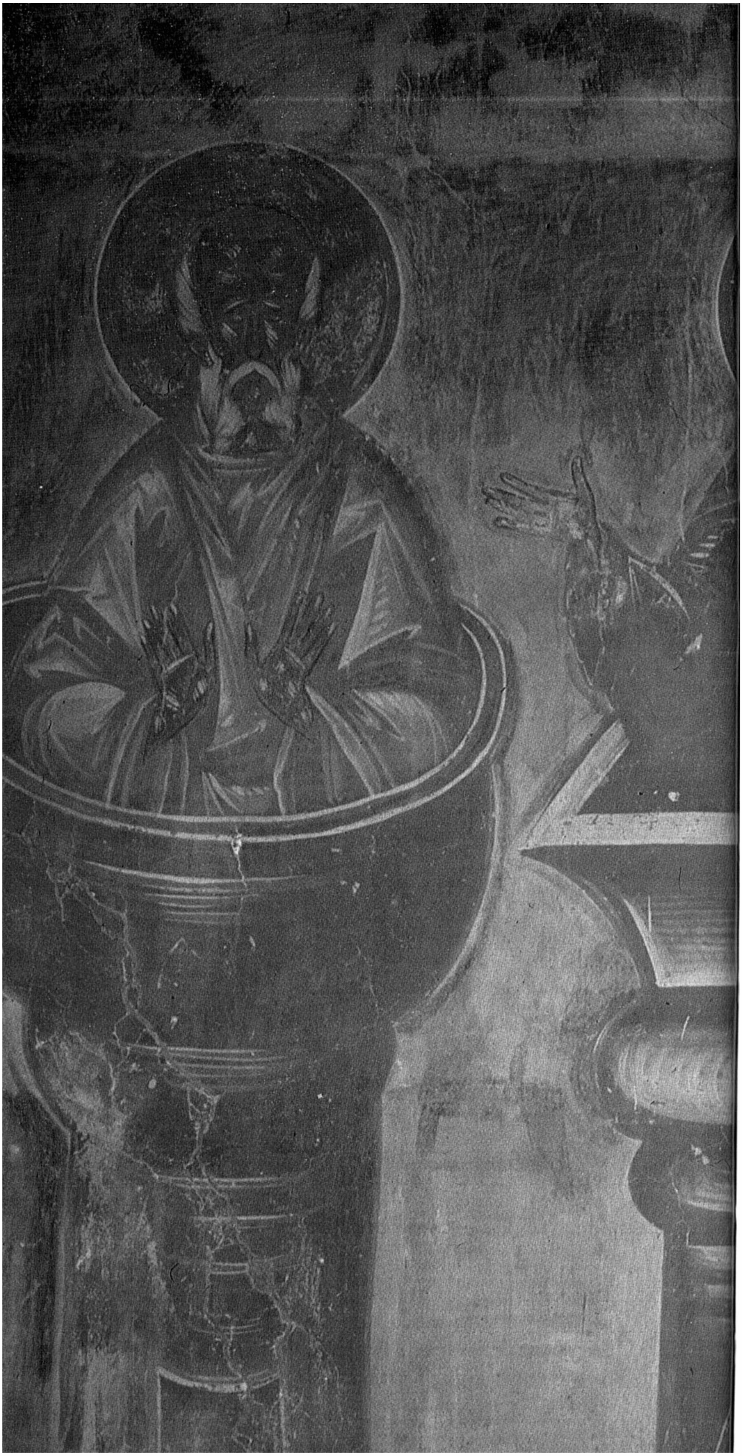
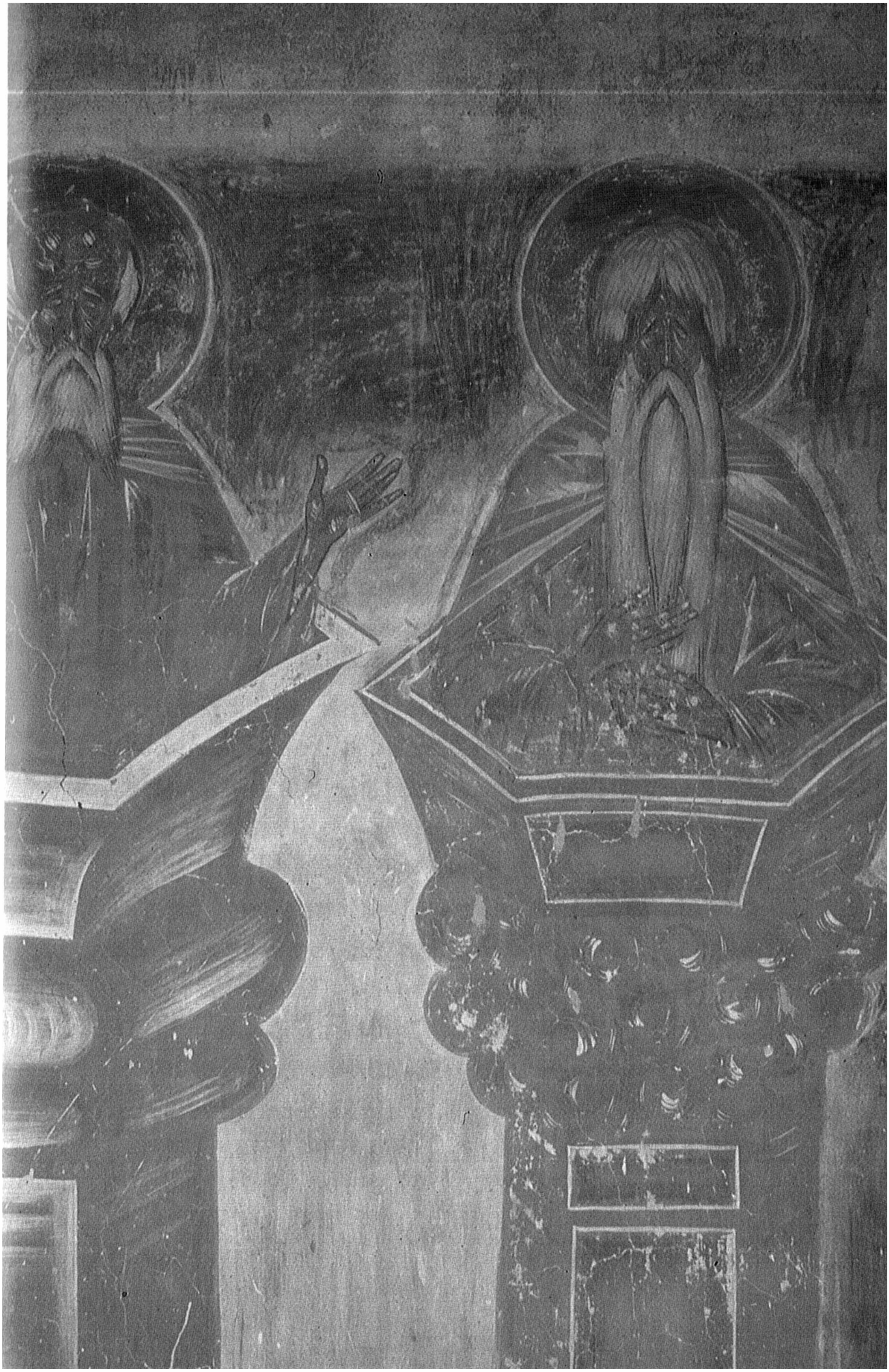
64

The Church of Our Saviour of the Transfiguration-in-Elijah-Street. *Noah.* Fresco by Theophanes the Greek. 1378

65

The Church of Our Saviour of the Transfiguration-in-Elijah-Street. *Stylite.* Fresco by Theophanes the Greek. 1378





conflict of spirit and flesh. The sketchiness, the seemingly incomplete manner of execution, and the open, tangible stroke are all specifically Theophanes's devices. They call to mind, though superficially, the techniques of the more recent trends, Impressionism and Expressionism.

From the 12th century the wooden Church of Our Saviour of the Transfiguration-in-Elijah-Street housed the icon of Our Lady of the Sign.

In 1354, in its vicinity, a stone temple was built for the icon. The remains of the church were unearthed under the existing Cathedral of Our Lady of the Sign (1682—88).

This huge cathedral is a far cry from the traditional style of Novgorodian architecture. Its crypt, five domes, galleries and window and door surrounds are all borrowings from Muscovite — or more precisely — all-Russian architecture. In 1702, the cathedral was frescoed by a group of Kostroma painters headed by Ivan Bakhmatov.

Until recently the Church of St Theodore Stratelates (1360—1361) stood on the bank of a stream which ran along the present-day Gagarin Prospekt. The church was built for the posadnik * Semion Andreyevich and his mother Natalia, on the site of an elder structure. Its western annex and belltower date from the late 17th century.

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* Posadnik, the prince's main associate and assistant, who took charge of the administration and the army in the prince's absence

One of the masterpieces of Novgorodian architecture, the church served as a classical model for many years to come. Its scheme was used in the construction of the famous churches of Our Saviour of the Transfiguration-in-Elijah-Street and of Sts Peter and Paul-in-Kozhevniki. The decorative treatment of the façades, characteristic of St Theodore Stratelates, was a novel element in Novgorodian architecture. Still, its decor is much more restrained than that of the façades of the above-mentioned churches. The interior features an originally devised choir: leading to it is not an entrance within the western wall but an open stairway in the north-western corner.

In 1910—11 large fresco fragments were first exposed in the church to be followed by numerous pieces uncovered in 1972—75. There is no consensus of opinion on the date of this wall painting, although all researchers note its stylistic affinity with the frescoes of the Church of Our Saviour-in-Elijah-Street. At the same time, their lower level of execution, compared to that of the murals of Our Saviour, cannot escape the scholar's eye. St Theodore Stratelates was undoubtedly painted not by Theophanes himself, but by one of his pupils or predecessors. The so-called Theophanes manner could have reached Russia before the arrival of the famous master, who only brought it to ultimate perfection.

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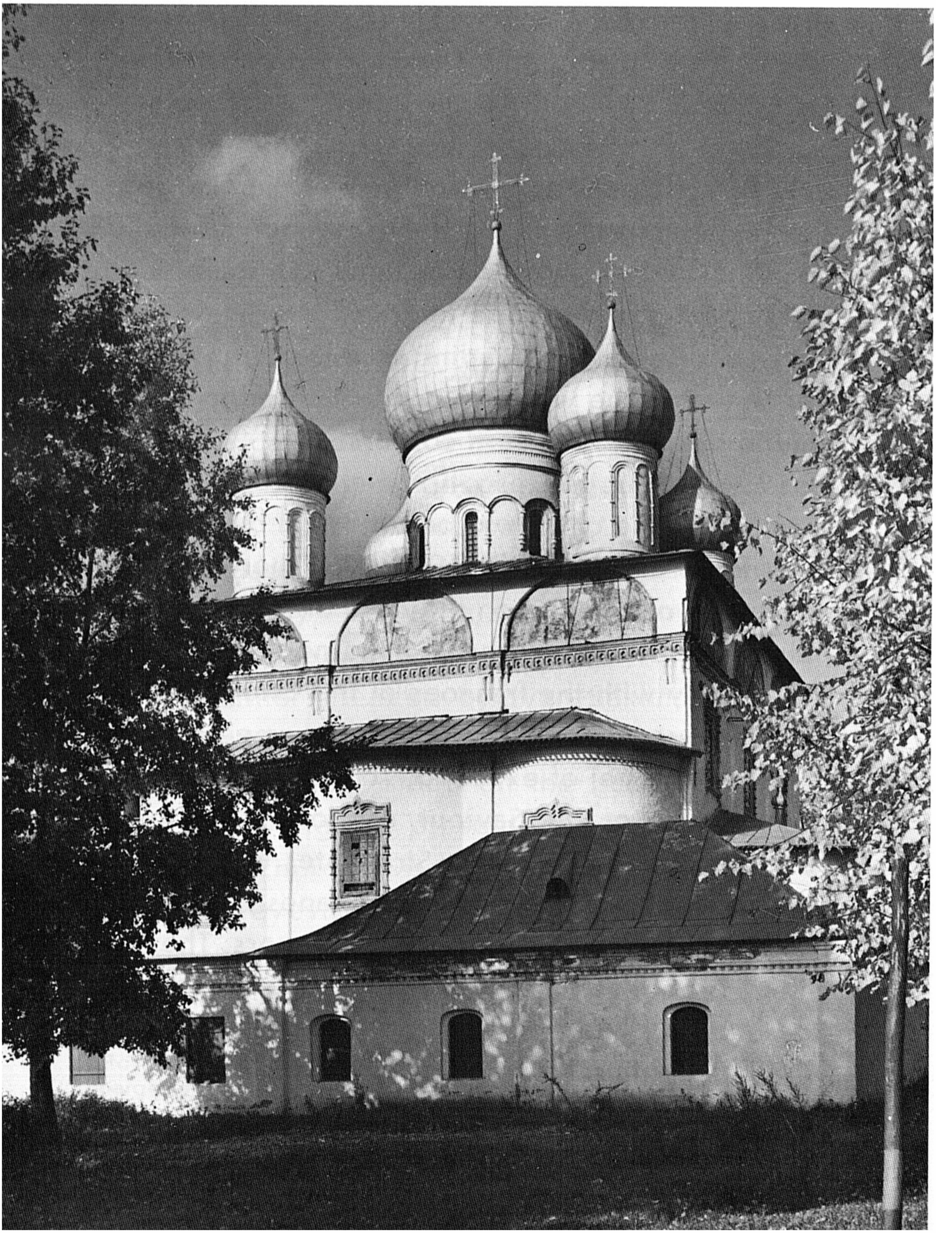
The Church of Our Lady of the Sign. 1682—88



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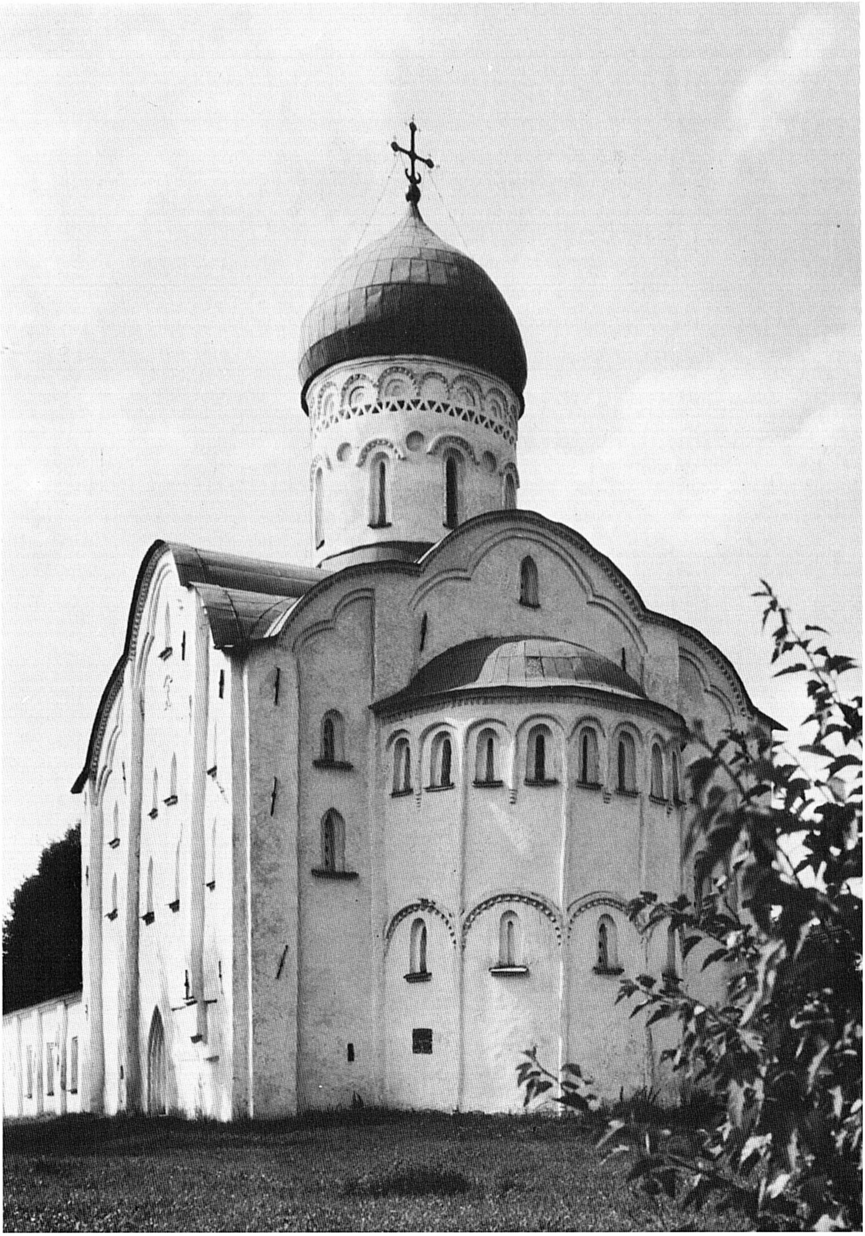
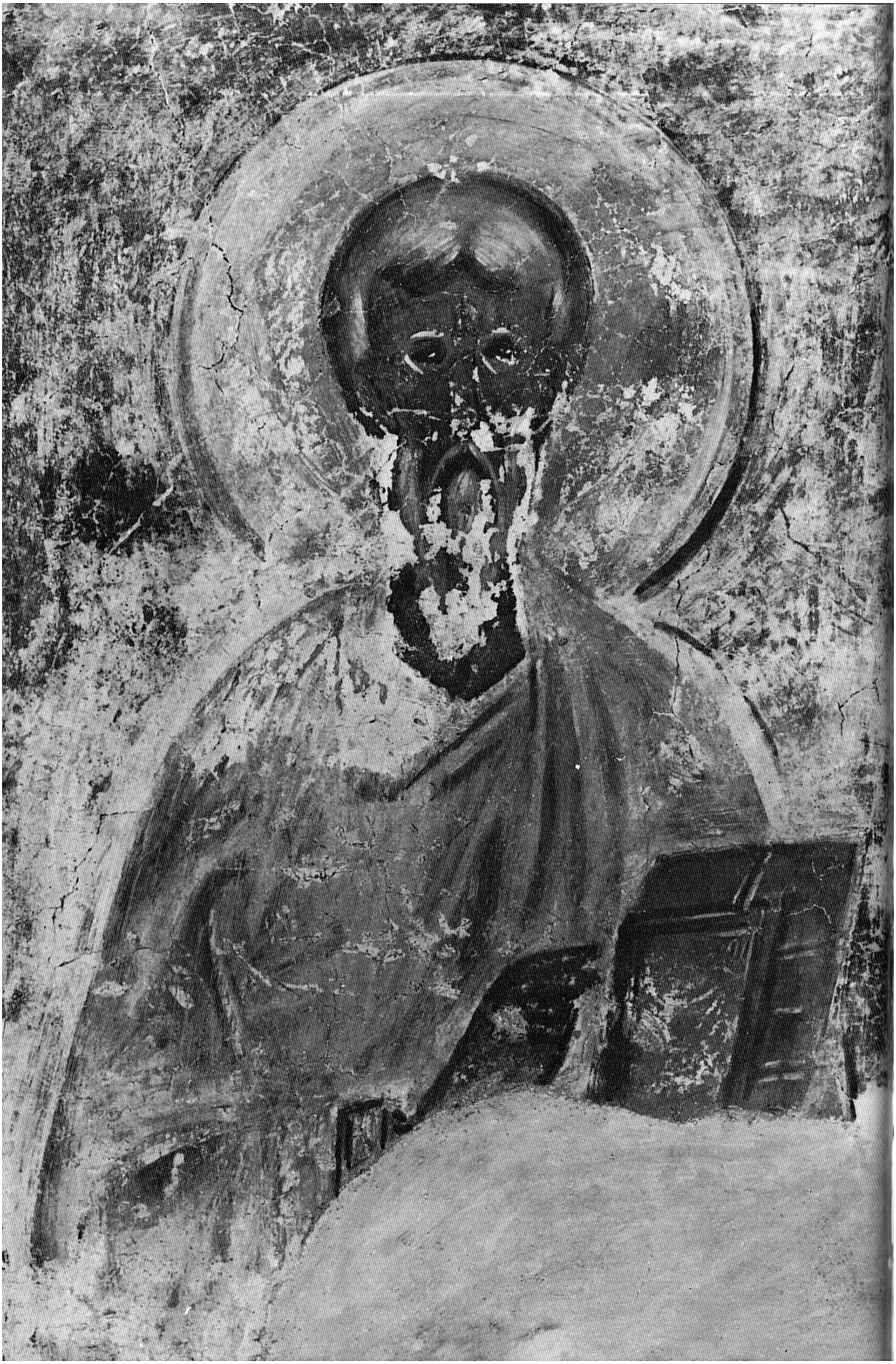
The Church of St Theodore Stratelates. 1360—61





Among the numerous similar structures of the 14th and 15th centuries the Church of St Theodore Stratelates stands out for its harmonious and complete forms.

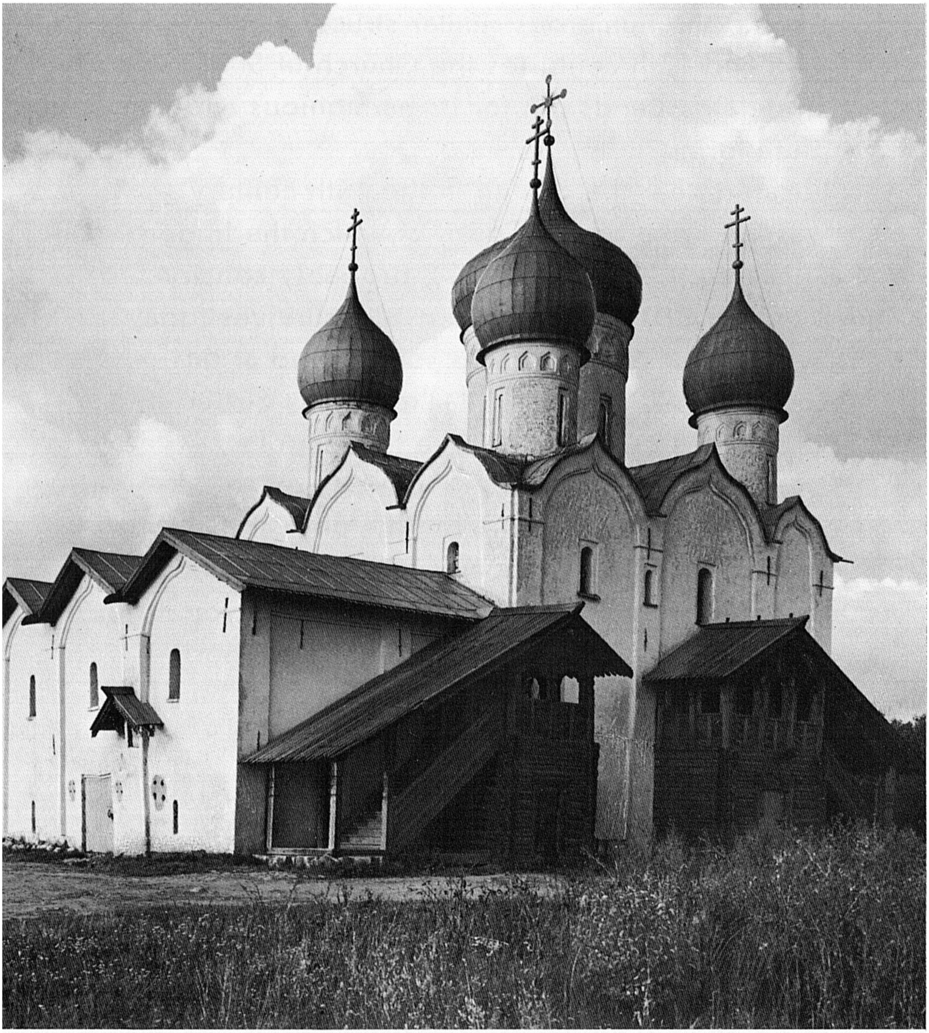
Located near the church in the 16th century was the Sovereign's Court, of which the huge St Nicetas Cathedral (1557), probably constructed by order of Ivan IV the Terrible, survives today. Evidently, the tsar and his sons stayed at this court in 1570. The six-pillar temple is girded on three sides by galleries. The five cupolas, which crowned the cathedral, no longer exist.

In the Carpenters' district of the city, at the confluence of the Volkhov and Vitka Rivers, stand the churches of St John the Divine — beyond the limits of the Outside town — and of Sts Boris and Gleb — within the city confines.

The Church of St John the Divine (1383—84) is an architectural miniature which repeats, though in a simplified form, the scheme of the aforementioned churches of Our Saviour-in-Elijah-Street, of St Theodore Stratelates-on-the-Stream, and others. The well-chosen location and the very strict clear-cut proportions make this church one of the most poetical in Novgorod.

The basic part of Sts Boris and Gleb is the structure dating from 1377, as evidenced by a single-apse altar section. In 1536 a new church with a saddle-roof and five domes, erected on

The Church of St Theodore Stratelates.
Prelate. Fresco. 14th century



69

The Church of Sts Boris and Gleb-in-Plotniki. 1536 the old foundation, had the appearance of a large cathedral-like structure.

Further on upstream the Volkhov are the premises of the former St Anthony Monastery (1106), named after its founder and first hegoumenon, who came to Russia from Western Europe. In 1117—19 the principal church of the monastery, that of the Nativity of Our Lady, was built on his money. Beginning in the 17th century, the church underwent repeated alterations; low annexes were attached, windows were splayed, a hip roof appeared, and huge bulbous cupolas replaced the ancient helmet-shaped domes. In the interior, arches were built in the northern and southern walls, the choir with its windows pulled down, and new murals painted in the 19th century.

Unfortunately, the fragments of the 1125 frescoes surviving in the altar section and its anteroom, were seriously damaged by the notches made to fix the new whitewash. As the church was dedicated to Our Lady, it naturally brought about the appearance of a cycle of frescoes depicting the Holy Virgin. This is evidenced by the scene of the Presentation in the Temple in the northern apse and a well-preserved, though very small, fragment of the Dormition on the southern wall, and a part of the Adoration of the Magi on the northern wall. Painted in conformity with the traditional canons in the upper part of the altar's

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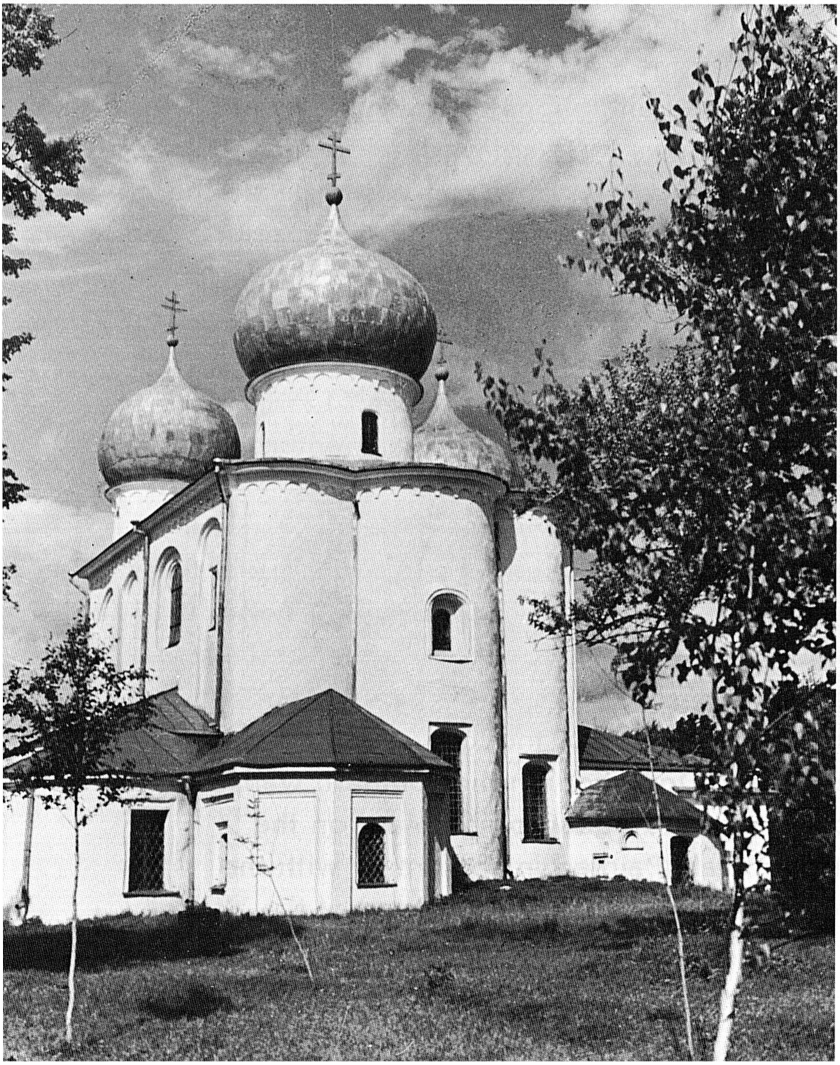
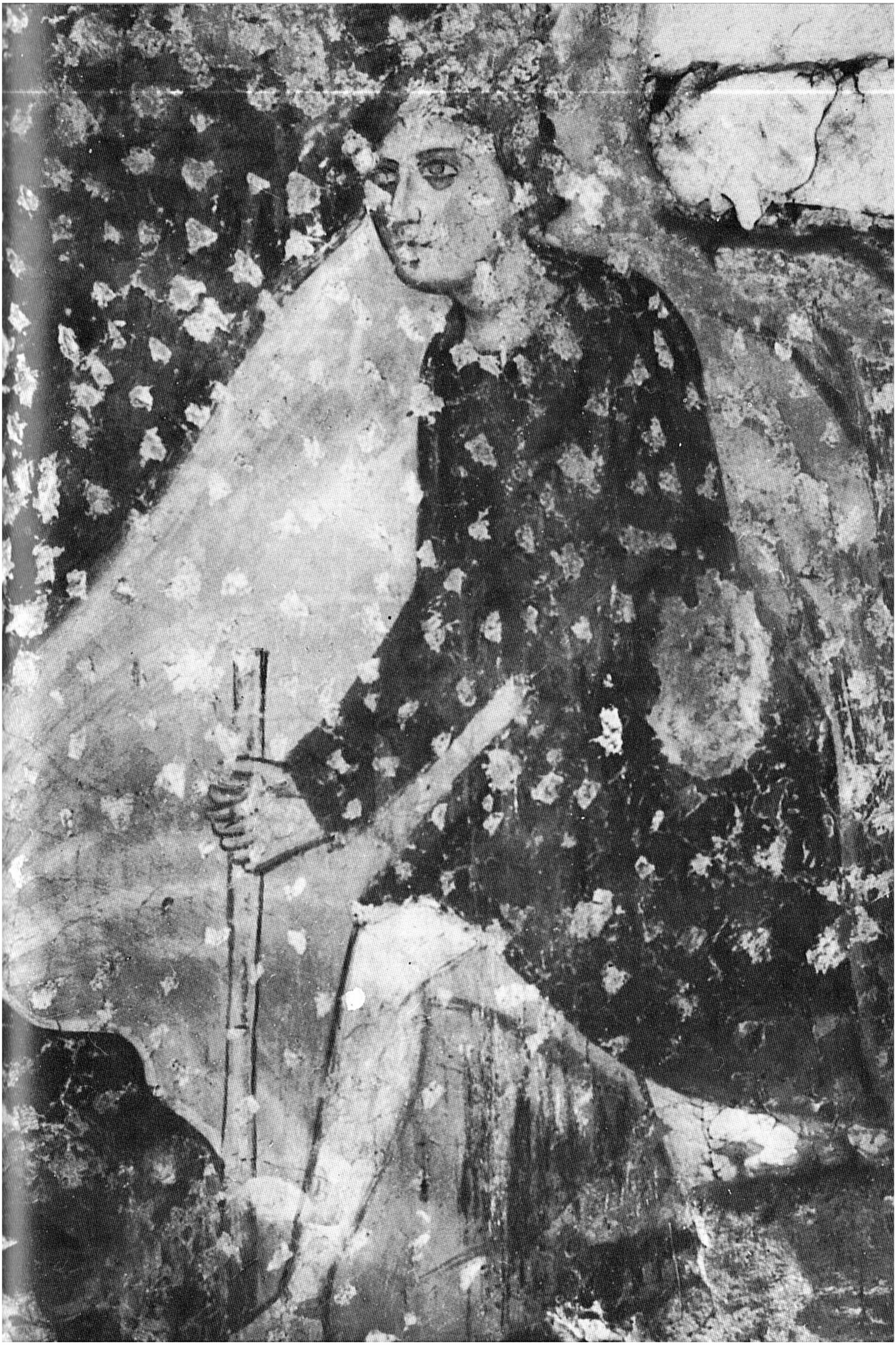
The Cathedral of the Nativity of Our Lady in the St Anthony Monastery. 1117—19

71

The Cathedral of the Nativity of Our Lady. *The Invention of the Head of St John the Baptist.* Fresco. 1125

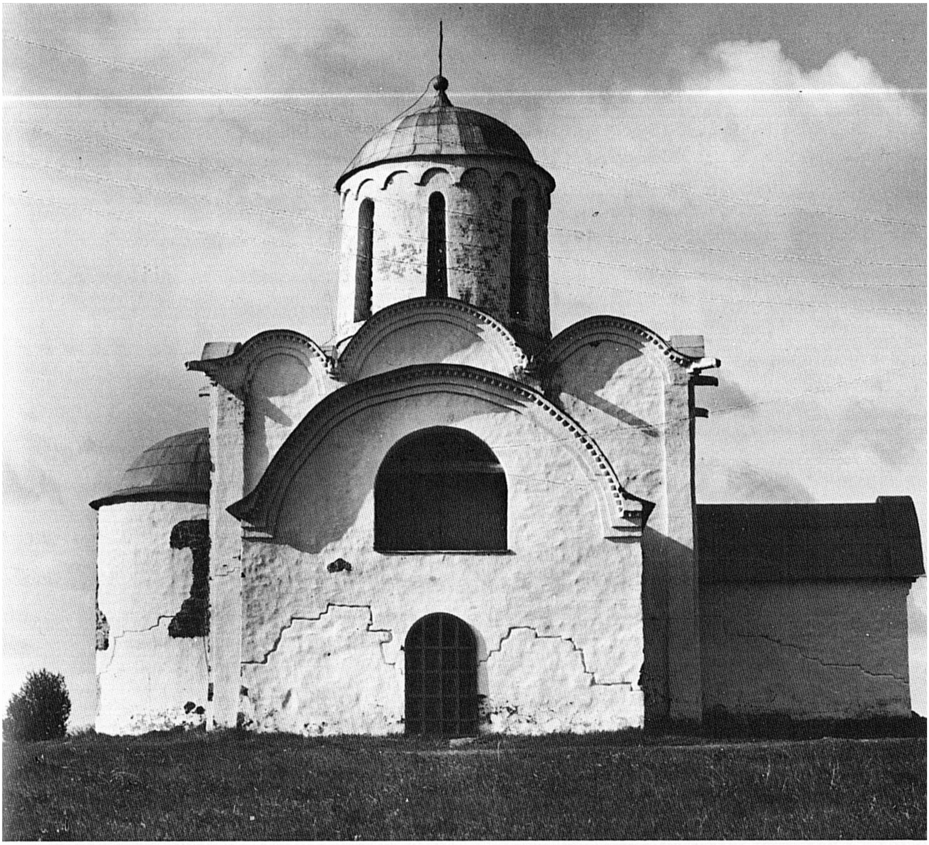




anteroom is the Annunciation, with the breast-length portrayals of saints below. In the passageway from the church to the southern apse the visitor's attention is arrested by the expressive figure of an archdeacon. In a fairly good state of preservation are the representations of saints in medallions on the piers. In the diaconicon are two scenes from the life of St John the Baptist: the Invention of the Head of St John the Baptist and the Delivery of the Head of St John the Baptist to Herodias's Daughter.

The extremely dense painting is built upon vivid colour combinations; the volumes are effectively modelled by light and shadow. One cannot rule out the fact that the style of the murals was influenced by Romanesque painting. Among the mysterious drawings of a secular character uncovered in the tower, the representation of a man in a 12th-century garb deserves special mention. Beside it is an inscription, *Peter*. Similar inscriptions of the 12th century also occur in the Cathedral of St Sophia. It is possible that they were made by Master Peter, the builder of the famous St George Cathedral in the St George (Yuriev) Monastery.

Another old Russian structure found in the area of the monastery is the single-pier refectory with the two-storeyed Church of the Presentation in the Temple (1533). Although single-pier chambers were known in Novgorod even at an earlier



72

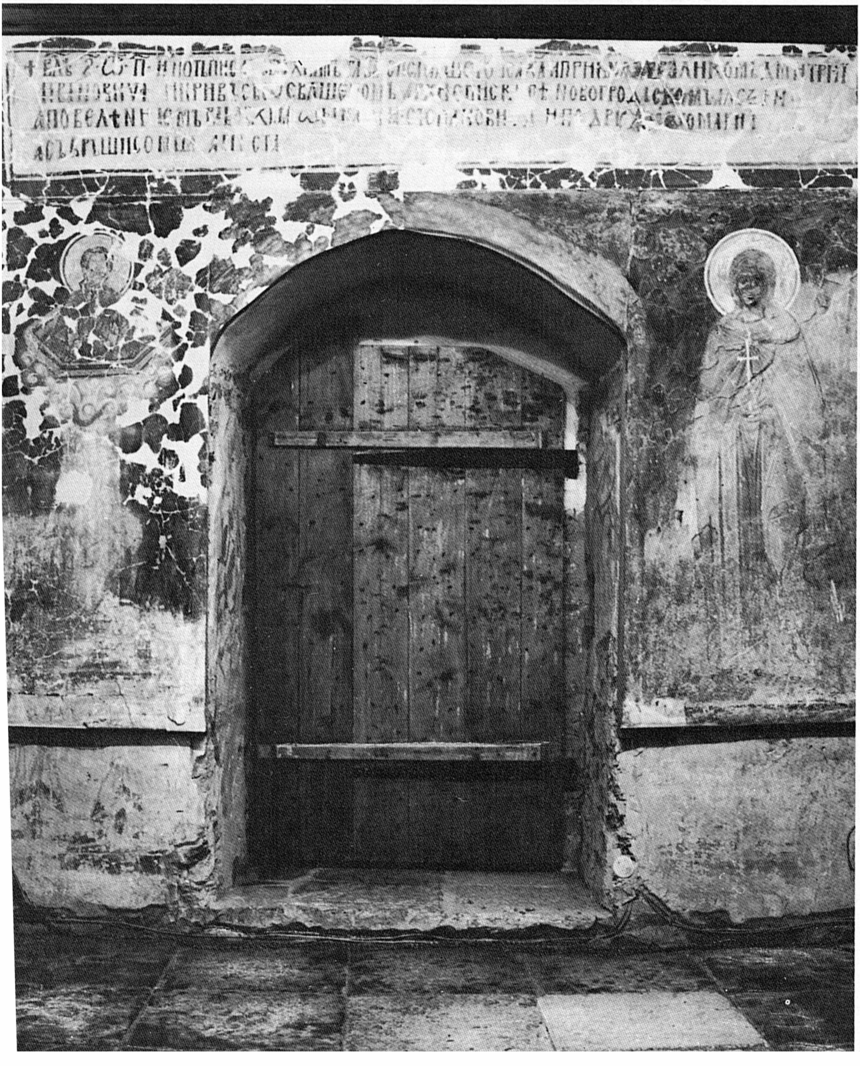
The Church of Our Saviour-in-Kovaliovo. 1345

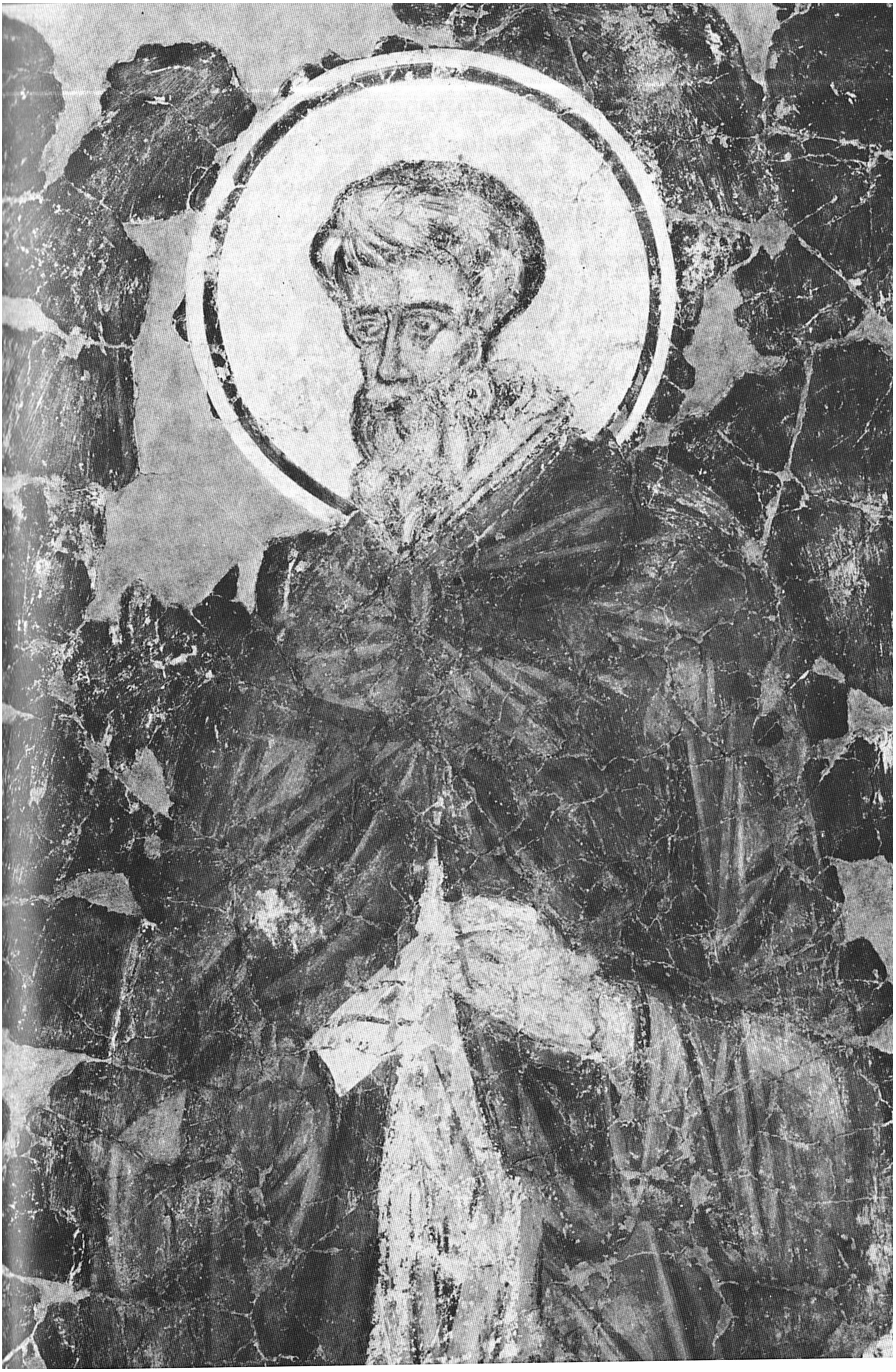
73

The Church of Our Saviour-in-Kovaliovo. Frescoes of 1380, reassembled by Alexander and Valentina Grekov in the 1970s

74

The Church of Our Saviour-in-Kovaliovo. *Prelate.* Fresco. 1380



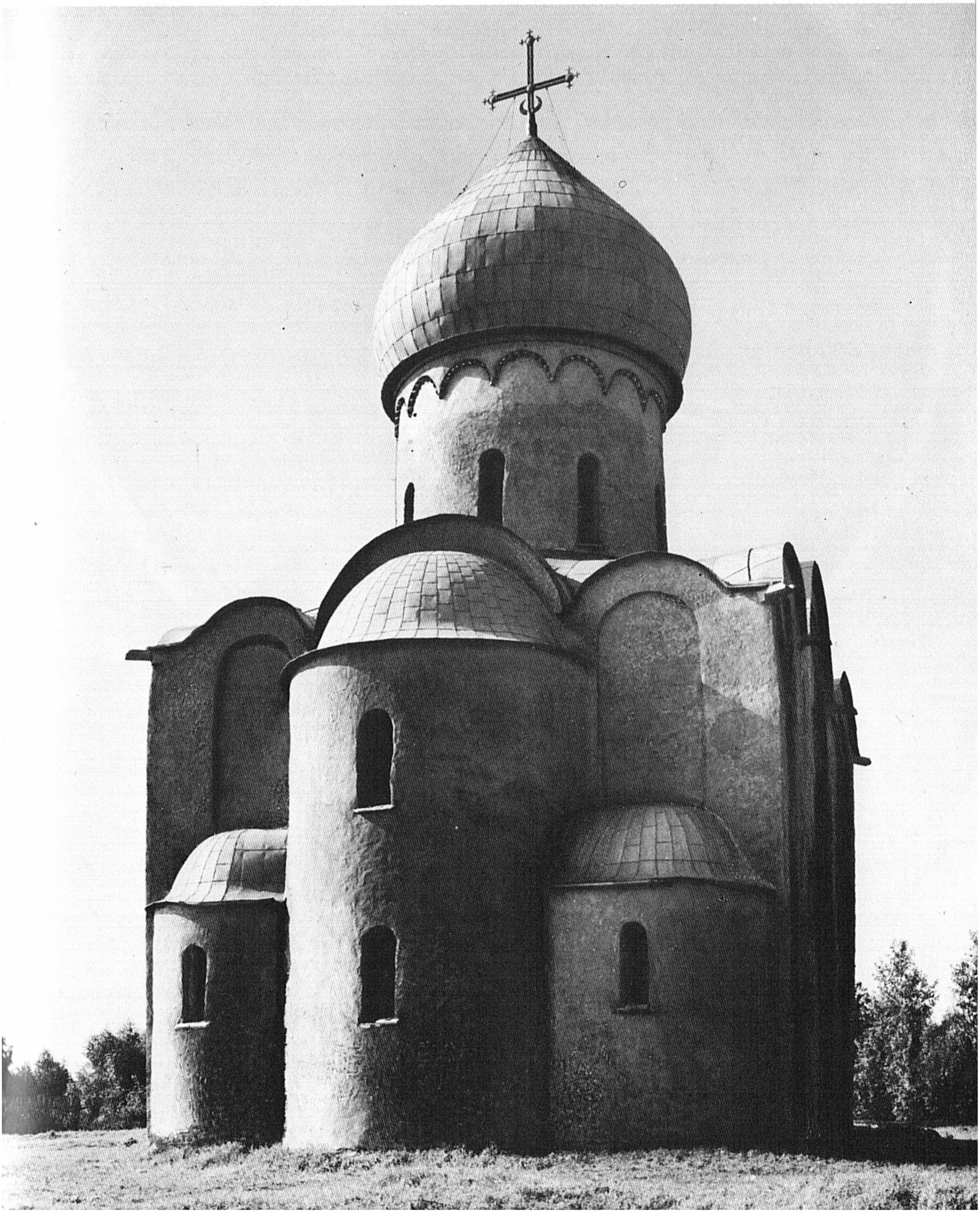


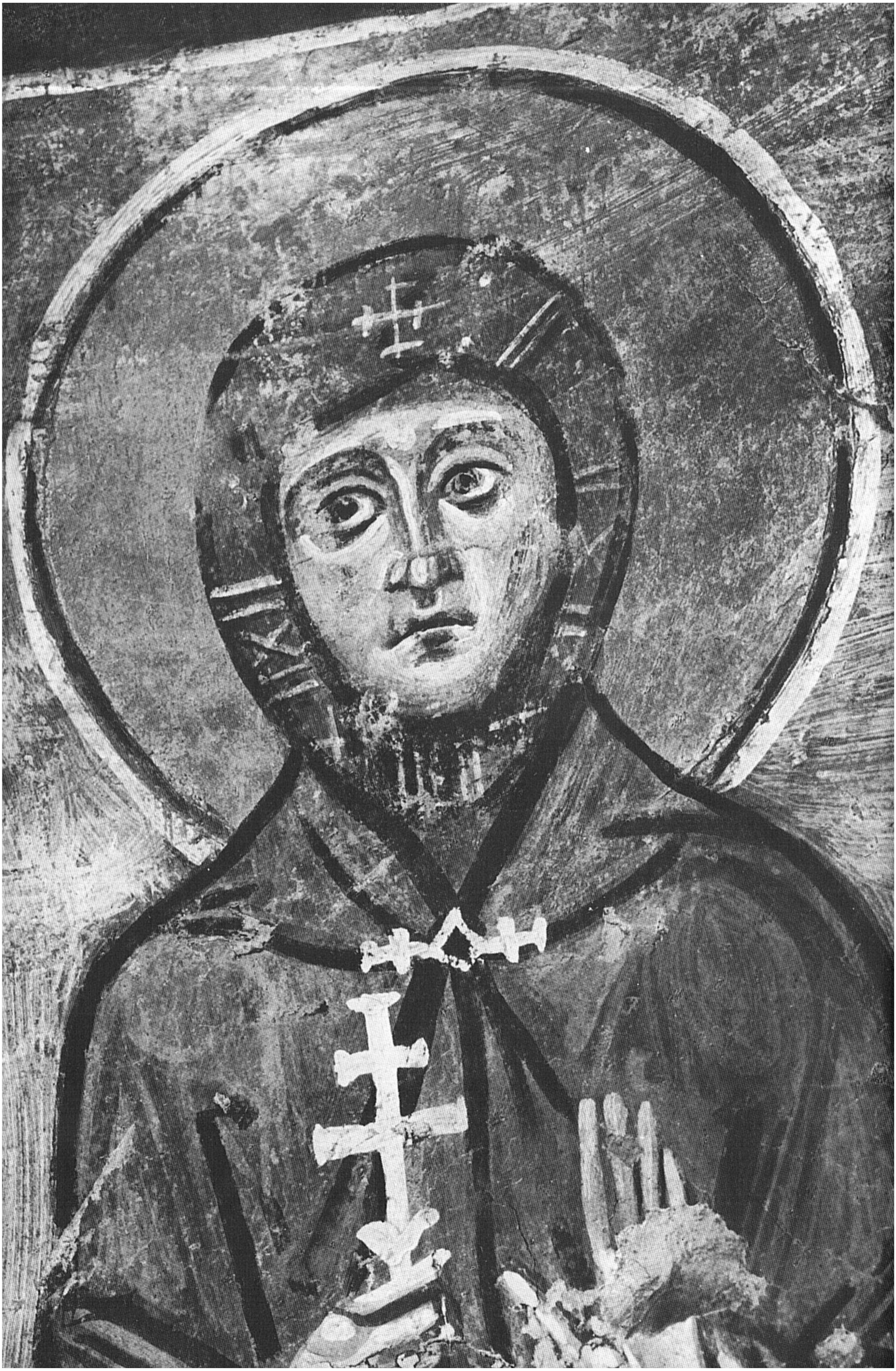
date, this was the first instance in Novgorodian architecture when a refectory with a church on its eastern side was built. The absence of an apse and the presence of a pillarless inner volume should be specially noted here. The façades of the church feature both Muscovite and Novgorodian decorative motifs.

Quite a few interesting monuments of architecture are found outside the city. By the road to Moscow, right after the rampart, towers the Church of the Nativity-in-the-Cemetery (1381—82). Architecturally, it is a somewhat rough version of the type of buildings like the Church of St Theodore Stratelates-on-the-Stream and the Church of Our Saviour-in-Elijah-Street. The church occupies a notable place in the history of early Russian art thanks to the surviving frescoes in the upper parts of the walls, in the drum and in the altar. In style, the murals hark back to the Byzantine-Hellenistic tradition. This follows from their manner of execution, colour scheme and representational framework. It is clear that several masters were involved in frescoing the church: the figures of the Prophets on the drum are painted now in sweeping, broad brushstrokes, now with meticulous classical precision, but each time in a vivid, buoyant manner. The faces of the Apostles in the monumental Dormition scene on the northern wall are strictly individualized.

75

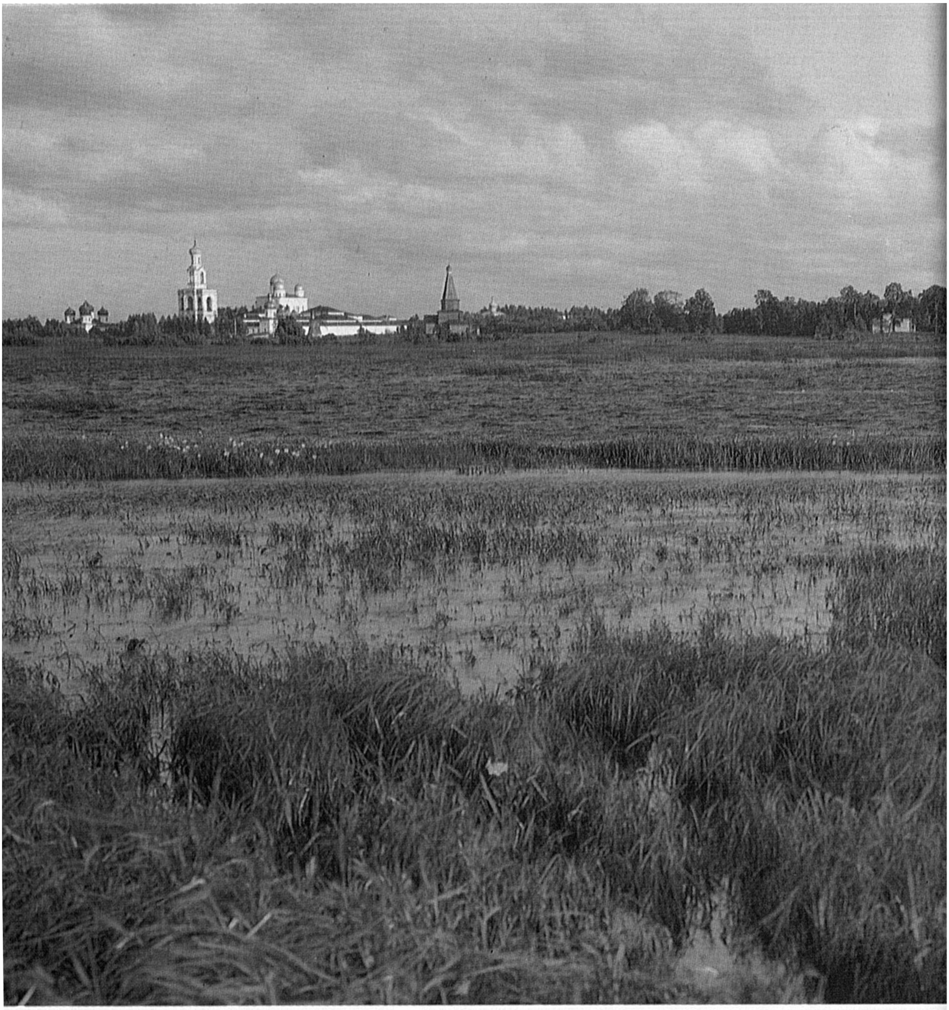
The Church of Our Saviour-on-Nereditsa-Hill. 1198





Further on along the road to Moscow, beyond the bridge across the Volkhovets River, which is the Volkhov's tributary, there are two villages — Volotovo, to the left, and Kovaliovo, to the right, somewhat aside from the road. Legend refers to Volotovo as the burial-place of Gostomysl whose name is associated with the invitation of the Varangians to rule Ancient Rus. Beyond the northern outskirts of the village lies the Volotovo Field. Here one can see the remains of the Church of the Dormition, built in 1352 and frescoed in 1363 by an anonymous predecessor of Theophanes the Greek. The church and its murals were destroyed by during the war. The same tragic lot fell to the Church of Our Saviour-in-Kovaliovo, seven years earlier. The exterior and interior of both churches reflected the architectural searchings of the mid-14th century. After the Second World War the Kovaliovo Church was resurrected from the ruins to the design of Leonid Krasnorechayev. Thanks to the tremendous efforts of the restorers Alexander and Valentina Grekov — who reassembled several compositions from an infinite number of tiny fragments — the original frescoes of 1380, which seemed to be irretrievably lost, have been partly restored. Work on the restoration continues. Onboard the motor vessels that sail at regular intervals from the pier near Yaroslav's Court

76
The Church of Our Saviour-on-Nereditsa-Hill. Fresco of 1199



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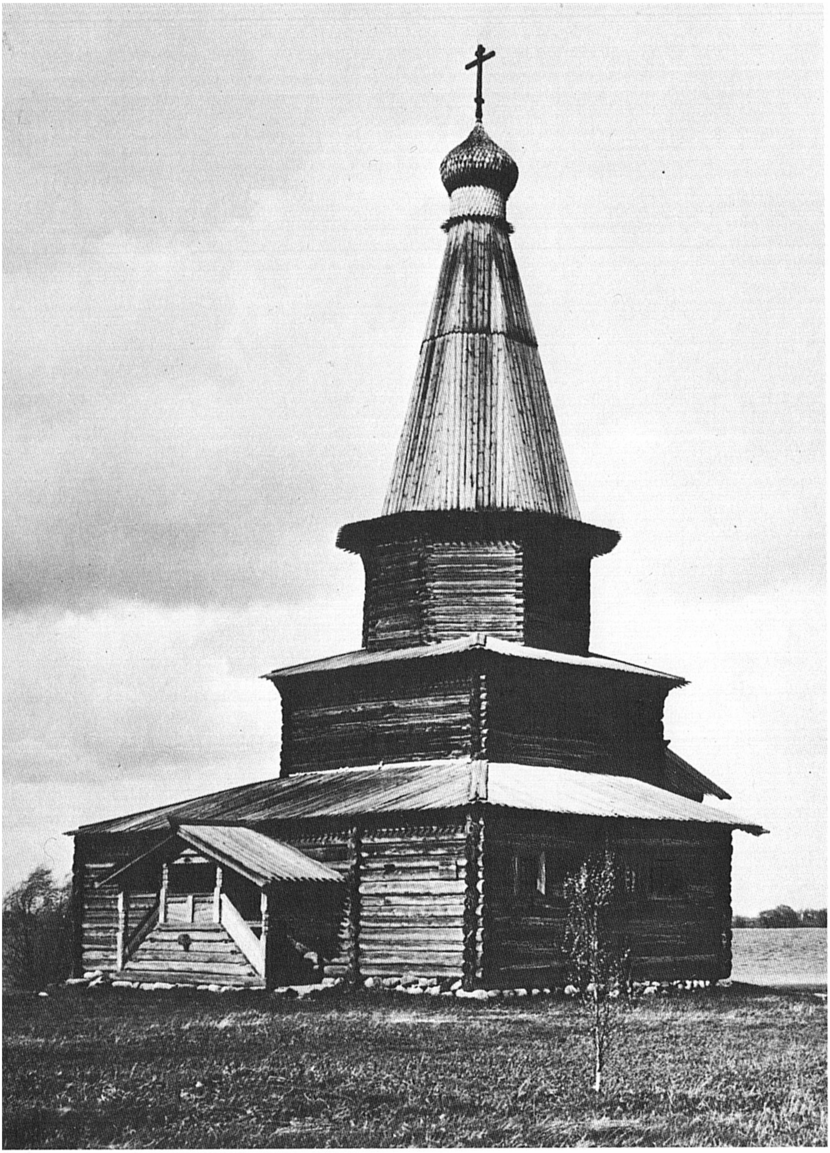
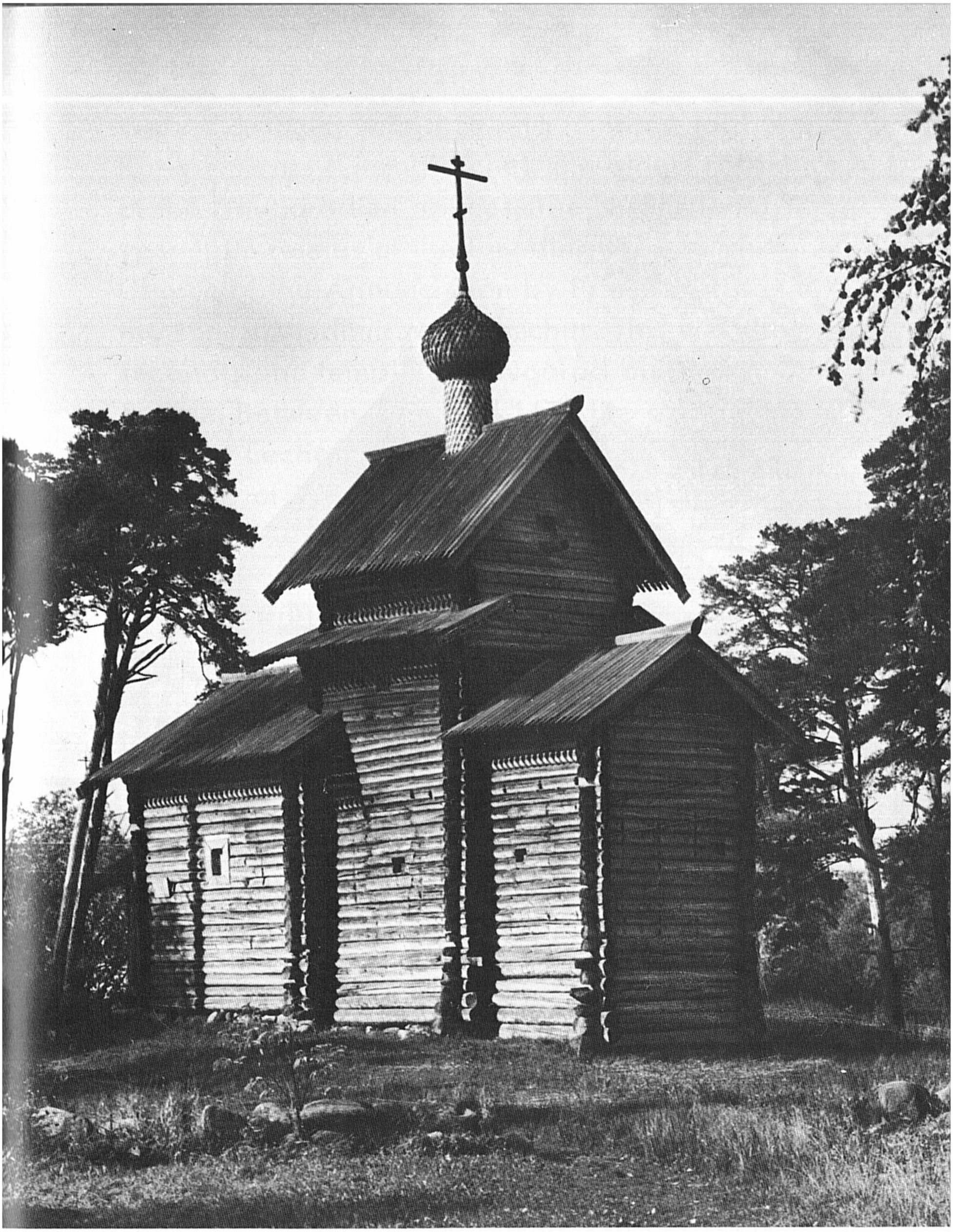
The "Vitoslavlitsy" Open-Air Museum of Wooden Architecture. At left, the ensemble of the St George (Yuriev) Monastery



78

The Church of the Dormition
from the village
of Kuritsko. 1595



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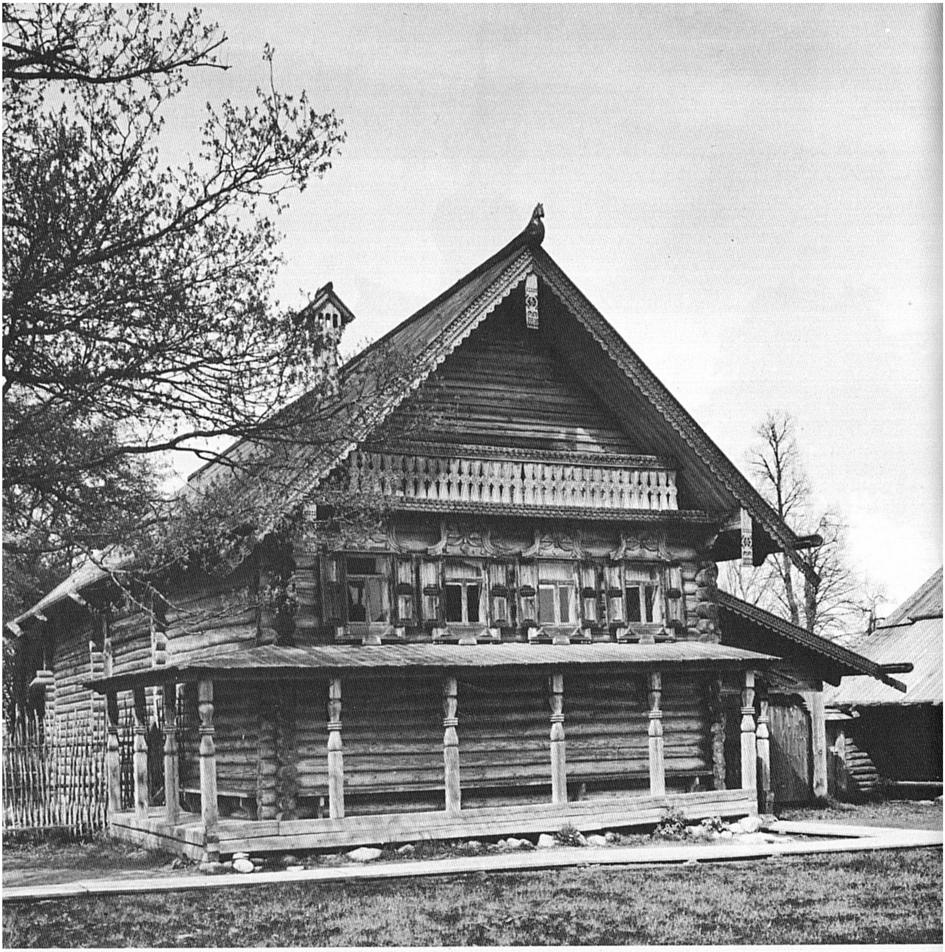
The Church of St Nicholas
from the village of Tukholya.
17th century



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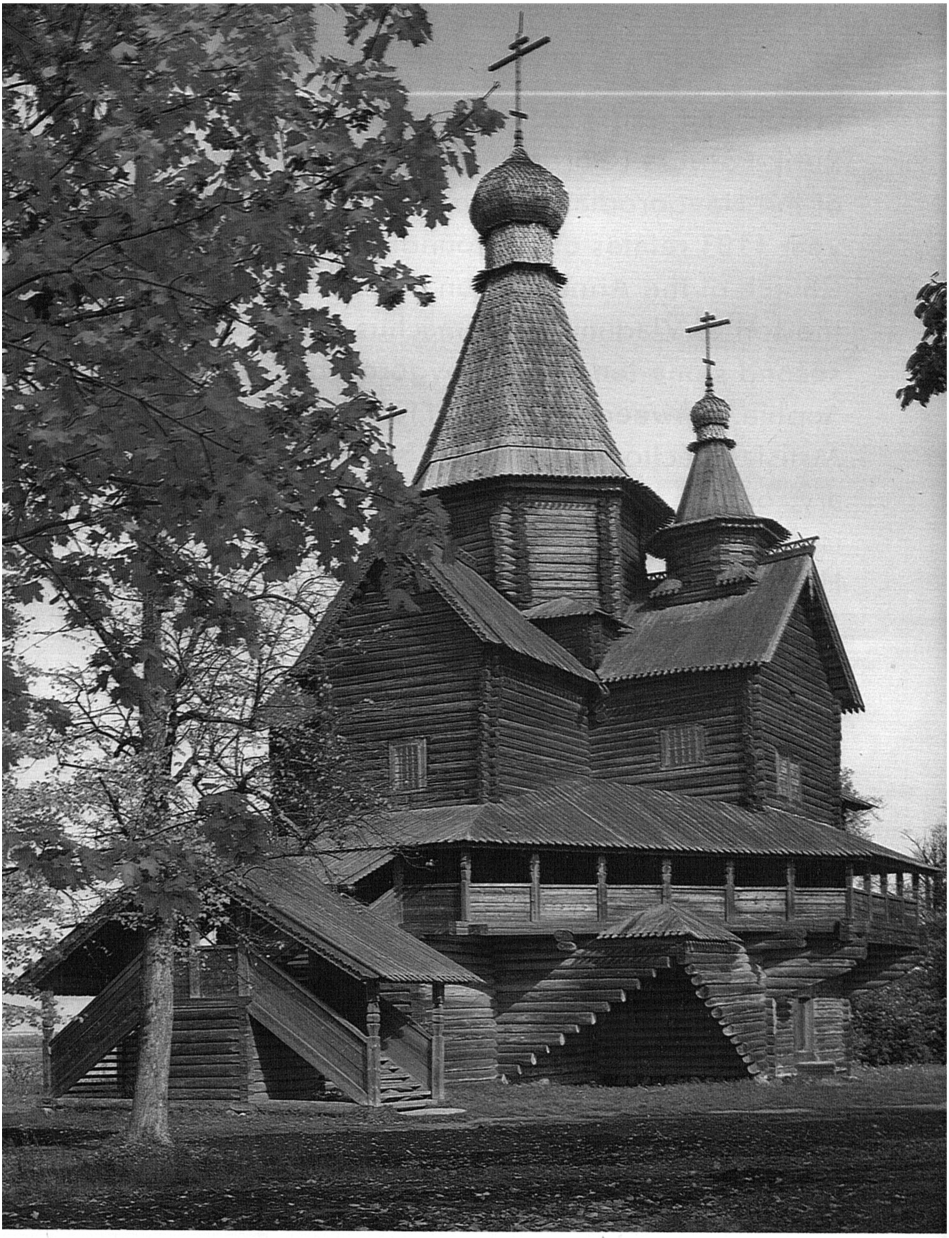
Izba (peasant house)
from the village of Ryshevo.
19th century

visitors can get, within 10—15 minutes, to the Rurik-Fortress (Gorodishche), the oldest residence of the Novgorodian princes. The chronicle for the year 1103 relates of the founding there of the Church of the Annunciation by Prince Mstislav, the son of Vladimir Monomachus. This was the second stone temple in Novgorod built after St Sophia. Between 1103 and 1177 the so-called Mstislav Lectionary was written for it. The lectionary, one of the oldest Russian manuscript books, is superbly illuminated, and is now kept in the Historical Museum in Moscow.

In 1966—70 the remains of this church were uncovered by archaeological excavations. It turned that this was a huge six-pillar structure with a tower at its north-eastern corner. The large number of fresco fragments and glazed floor tiles found during excavations attest to the fact that the church was intended for gala ceremonies.

In 1342—43 a new building was erected on the site of the destroyed church of the 12th century. The Church of the Annunciation of the 14th century was severely damaged in 1941 by the shelling of the Nazi artillery. The surviving parts have been conserved. To the east of the Fortress, on Nereditsa Hill, lies a small village with a typically Novgorodian church on the outskirts. This is the Church of Our Saviour of the Transfiguration, built by Prince Yaroslav Vladimirovich



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The Church of the Nativity
of Our Lady from the village
of Peredki. 16th—17th century

in 1198 and decorated in 1199. Its laconic and powerful architecture provided a characteristic example of the Novgorodian style of the late 12th century while its frescoes which formed a harmonious ensemble of a very high artistic merit belonged to the monuments of world importance. In 1941 the church was reduced to ruins by enemy shelling, and most of the frescoes perished. The existing building is a copy of the ancient church recreated after measurements made before the October Revolution and incorporating the extant parts of the church of the late 12th century. Fresco fragments have survived in the central apse, diaconicon and on the southern and western walls. The representation of St Peter of Alexandria in the central apse still retains some of its colour intensity which was common to the murals as a whole. In order to create a manly, even austere image of this high-ranking priest, the artist makes skilful use of the expressive elegant contour in the treatment of face, garment and hair. The imagery of the Nereditsa frescoes is akin to its architecture. Both produce the sensation of invincible might and concentrated spiritual vigour.

The Rurik-Fortress commands a beautiful view of the surroundings. On the north, beyond the abutments of the bridge, opens the panorama of Novgorod with its golden-topped St Sophia; somewhat nearer is the bowl of Miachino Lake; and

almost opposite, in a picturesque grove, are seen tall-roofed structures of an open-air museum of wooden architecture. South of it are the buildings of the St George (Yuriev) Monastery.

The open-air museum introduces visitors to all kinds of wooden buildings — churches, mills, peasant cottages, granaries — dating from different periods but not earlier than the 16th century. (It is appropriate to mention here that already in the 11th century men of other Russian lands, when speaking of Novgorodians, would call them 'carpenters'.) The hip-roofed Church of the Dormition from the village of Kuritsko (1595), installed in the proximity of the Volkhov River, was brought here in 1964 and laid the foundation of the museum. This was followed by the Church of St Nicholas from Tukholya (17th century) and a number of other churches. Among these the Church of the Nativity of Our Lady from Peredki (16th century) stands out for its structural perfection. Stemming from the Kuritsko Church is the Dormition, an icon painted in the 14th century (now in the Novgorod Museum of History, Architecture and Art). The remarkable icon of St Nicholas from the Church of the Nativity, probably also of the 14th century, is kept at the Hermitage in Leningrad. The museum continues to expand, combining in its already extensive exhibition the most characteristic types of

82

The Church of the
Annunciation-at-Arkazhi. 1179

83

Windmill from the village
of Ladoshchino. 19th century

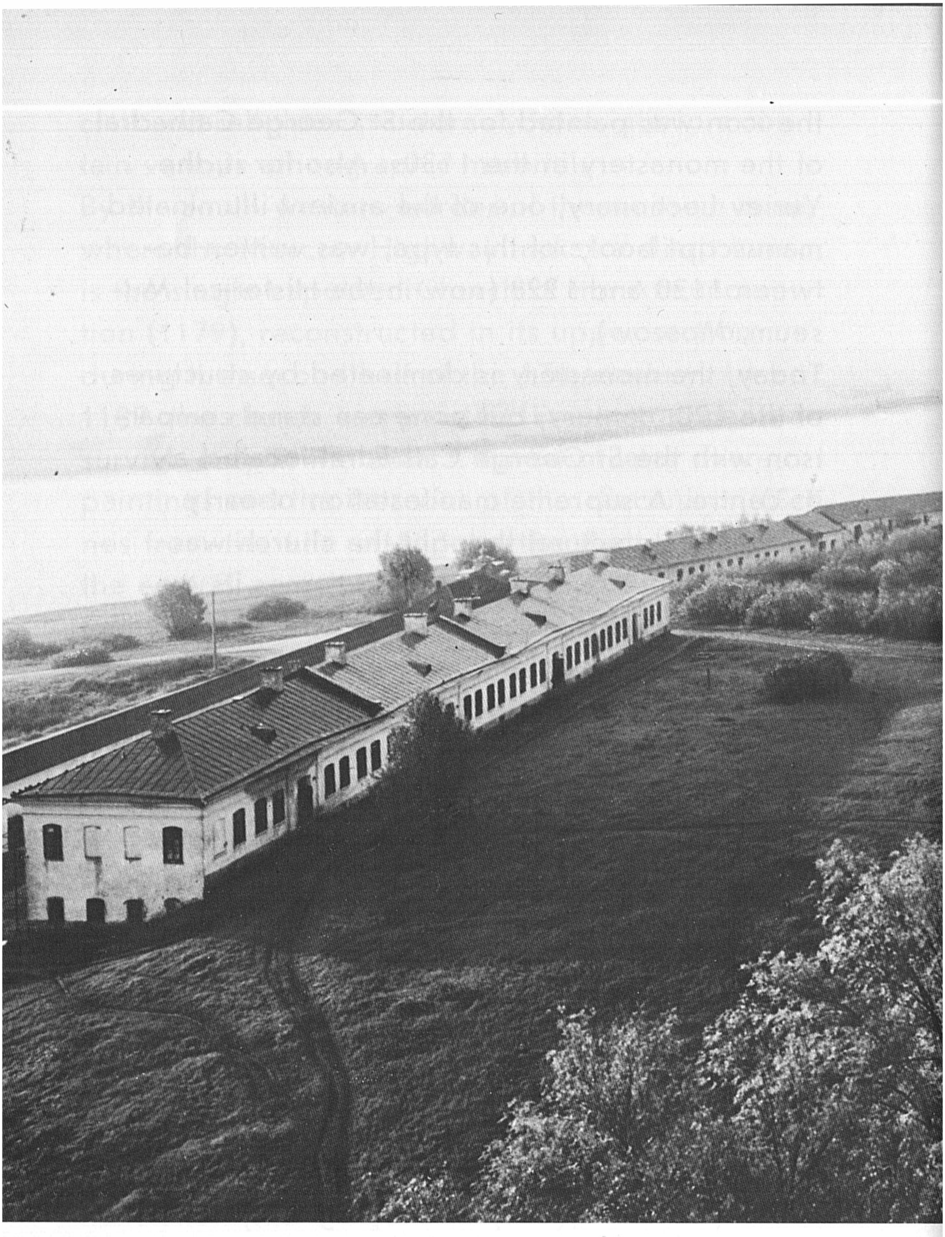
civil and religious structures whose interiors contain various ethnographic material.

By the south-western border of the museum zone, where the Moscow Highway makes a sharp turn, is the single-cupolaed Church of the Annunciation (1179), reconstructed in its upper section during the second half of the 17th century. In 1189 the church was painted. Fresco fragments survive only in the altar. Cleared of later overpaintings are the frescoes of the diaconicon (Scenes from the Life of St John the Baptist), the central apse (two tiers of prelates' figures) and the small altar (the Our Lady cycle).

Although the chronicles do not record the founding of the St George (Yuriev) Monastery, it probably took place long before the monastery was first mentioned in the entry for 1119. The largest Novgorodian cloister, it played an outstanding part in the ecclesiastic, political and cultural life of the city. Several scholars think that the oldest of all known icons of St George (1030, the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow) stems from this monastery. Of exceptional historic and artistic value is another icon of the saint painted in the 12th century for the Dormition Cathedral of the Moscow Kremlin. The famous Ustiug Annunciation (the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow) bears this name only by tradition; it would be more proper to call it the Yuriev Annunciation since the icon was painted for the St George Cathedral of the monastery in the 1130s. Also for it, the Yuriev Lectionary, one of the ancient illuminated manuscript books of this type, was written between 1120 and 1228 (now in the Historical Museum, Moscow).

Today, the monastery is dominated by structures of the 19th century, but none can stand comparison with the St George Cathedral located at its centre. A supreme manifestation of early Russian architectural thought the church was founded in 1119. One chronicle names its creator: 'and built by Master Peter', which is actually the first mention of an architect to be found in old Russian chronicles. The name of Master Peter is associated with the construction of other Novgorodian churches of the early 12th century, including the Cathedral of St Nicholas in Yaroslav's Court and the Church of the Annunciation in the Rurik-Fortress.

The St George Cathedral is perceived as a triumph of artistry over stone. This is the key feature that unites all Novgorodian architecture of the 11th to 15th century. The crystal clarity and unity of the volumes is emphasized by tiers of windows and double-stepped niches. In spite of the thick cultural layers burying the lower parts of the walls and in spite of the cornice seemingly extinguishing the energy of the dynamic



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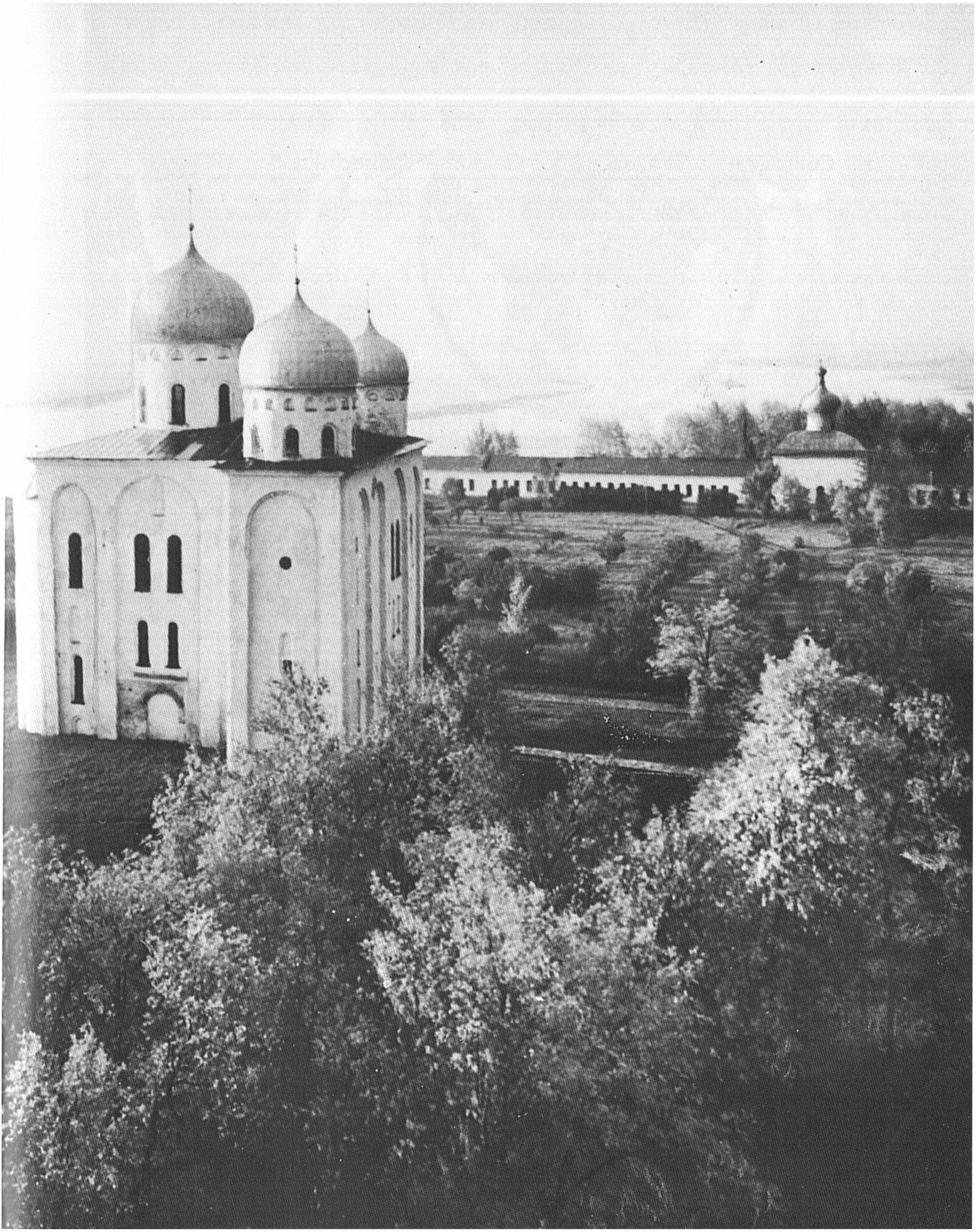
The St George (Yuriev)
Monastery. The Cathedral
of St George. 1119

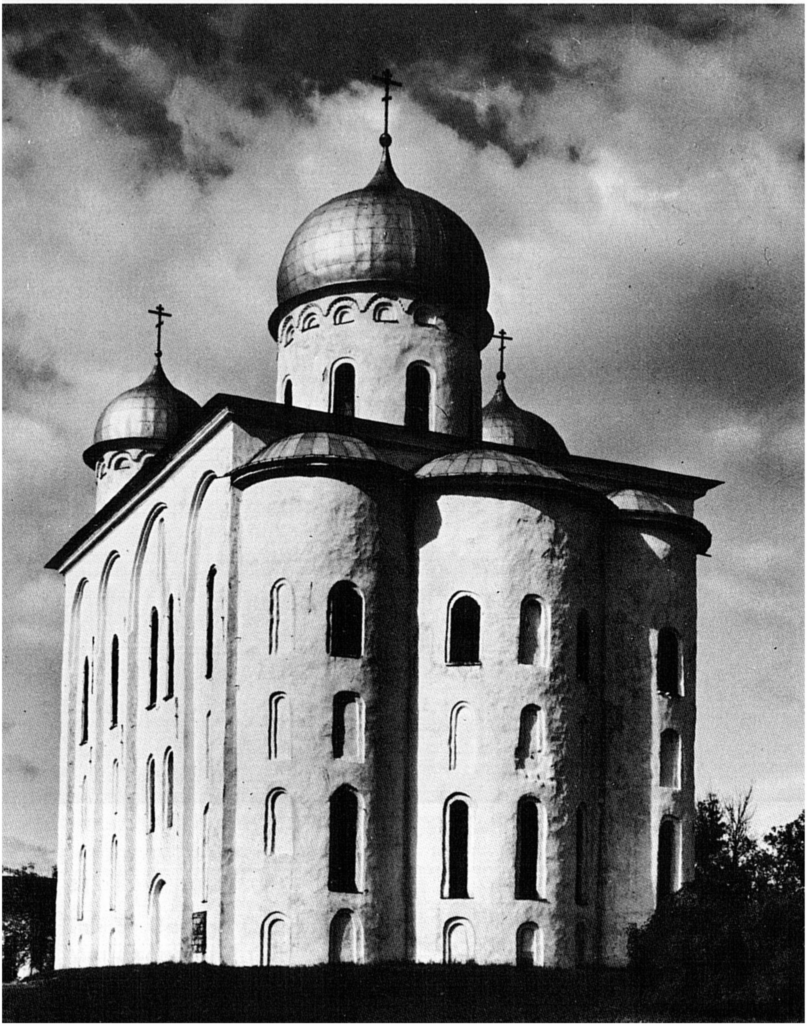


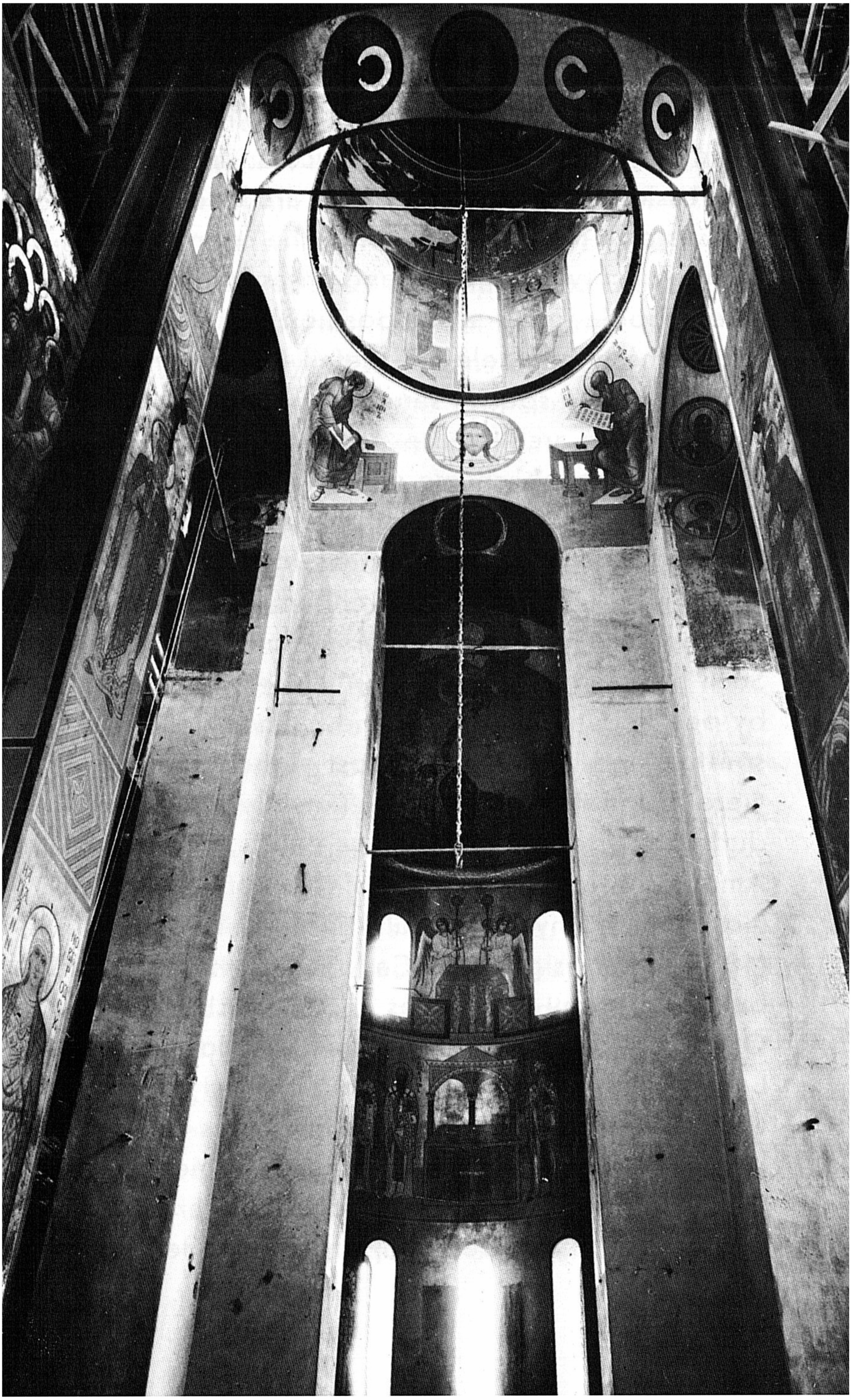
85

The Cathedral of St George

86

The Cathedral of St George
Interior





wall surfaces, the height of the building and its impetuous surge upward produce an indelible impression. The character of the architectural masses as if modelled by hand, the spontaneous composition with a tower and an asymmetric three-cupola top — a composition that accentuates the harmony of whole and detail — everything is imbued with a special sense of majesty inherent in Novgorodian architecture.

The architectural scheme of the interior, resolved in an energetic and dynamic manner, is notable for the well-thought-out relationship of space and volumes. It looks as if the architect aspired to convey here his idea of a harmonious world.

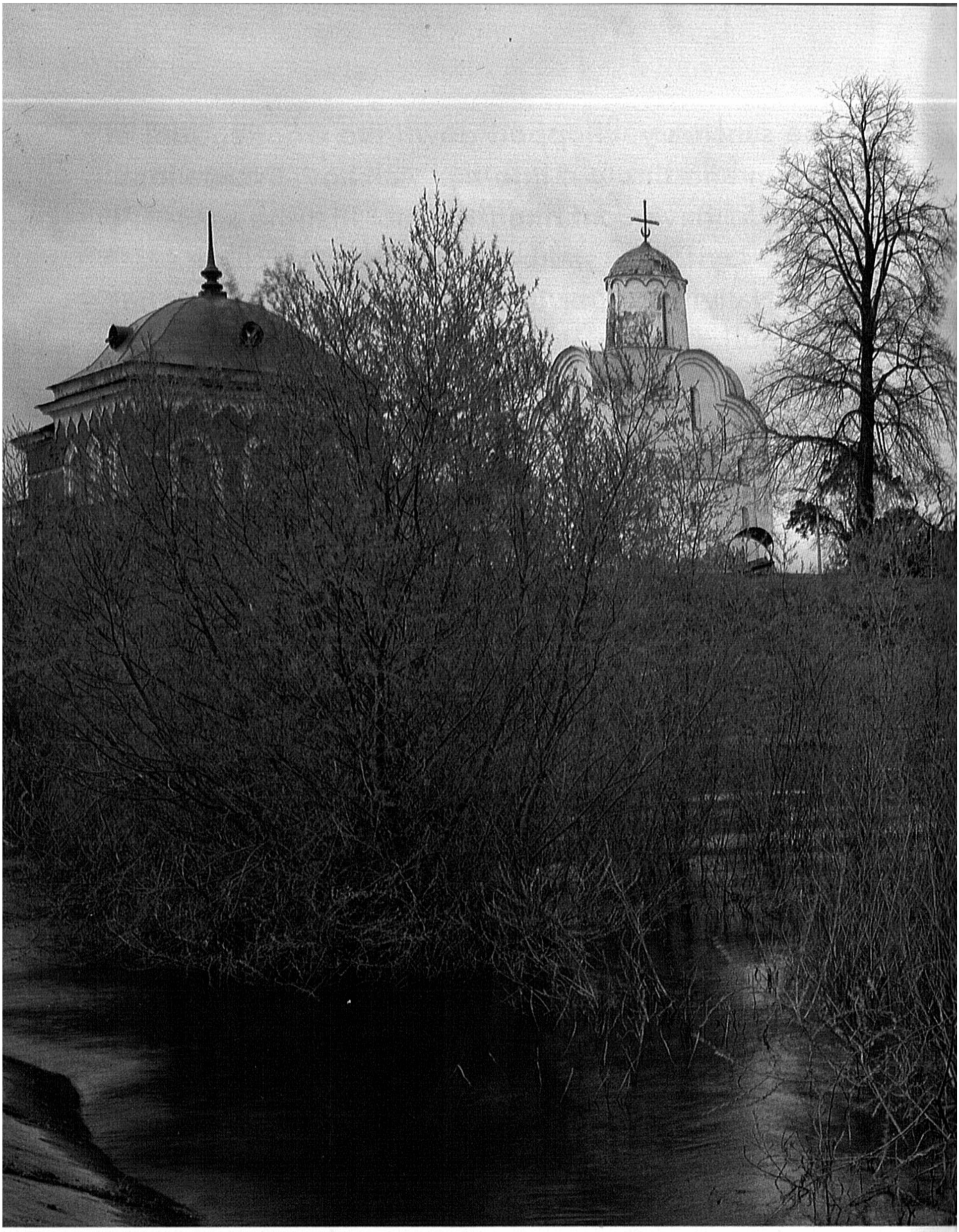
Such buildings could have only been constructed by people who keenly felt the harmony of the spiritual and the material. Most of the murals were lost in the 19th century (knocked down during a restoration).

Among the other structures of the monastery the most noteworthy is the multi-tiered bell-tower (1838—41) designed by Carlo Rossi, the celebrated builder of many ensembles of St Petersburg.

On the site where the Volkhov River flows from Lake Ilmen is a small pine grove, called Peryn. Legend has it that in pre-Christian times there was in it a pagan sanctuary of Perun, the ancient Slavs' god of thunder and lightning. After the Novgorodians had been baptized, they destroyed the sanctuary, chopped down the wooden idol of Perun and threw it into the Volkhov. Excavations of 1951 have confirmed the fact that the sanctuary lay to the south-west of the Church of the Nativity of Our Lady and that it had the form of an eight-petal flower laid out in stone.

Until quite recently art historians dated the Church of the Nativity to the 15th century. However, extensive postwar research has shown that the church was constructed in the first quarter of the 13th century. This was the last stone building in Novgorod to be erected prior to the Mongol-Tartar invasion. In many respects, it anticipated the style of Novgorodian architecture of the 16th and 17th centuries. One of the novel features is its roof, borne on a three-foil arch and conforming to the construction of the vaults. The decor is extremely frugal, as was usually the case with Novgorodian churches; merely a band of relief ornamentation enlivens the top of the drum. The single apse, made somewhat lower compared to the overall height, enhances the impression of the building's weightlessness and its surge skyward.

From Peryn, on a clear day, one can see, on the opposite bank of the Volkhov, the silhouette of the church of the former Monastery of St Nicholas-on-the-Lipna (on the swamp), dating from 1292. This was the first Novgorodian structure



87

Peryn

to be raised after the liberation of Rus from the Mongol-Tartar yoke. Its forms are very similar to those of the Nativity of Our Lady in Peryn. The principal icon of the church was St Nicholas-on-the-Lipna (see p. 73). Destroyed during the World War II, the building was restored in 1960. On the outskirts of Novgorod there are a number of other monastery complexes whose structures date mainly from the 16th and 17th centuries. Heavily damaged during the war, they have been either restored, as the Monastery of St Nicholas at Viazhishchi, or are being reconstructed, as the Khutyn Monastery, 10 km away from Novgorod, on the right bank of the Volkhov.
All the hardships and trials notwithstanding, time has preserved enough evidence of the Novgorodians' amazing capacity to transform their buildings into real works of art. Mute witnesses to a plethora of events, the ancient monuments of the city can tell a lot, reflecting, as they do, many glorious chapters of Russian history.
In 1984 Novgorod celebrates the 1125th anniversary of its birth. In this old Russian city, the outstanding monuments of the spiritual and material culture coexist with those of our own times, forming a unique harmonious whole. Such a unity of past and present, viewed in its continuous development, is the distinctive feature of all other ancient cities in this country.

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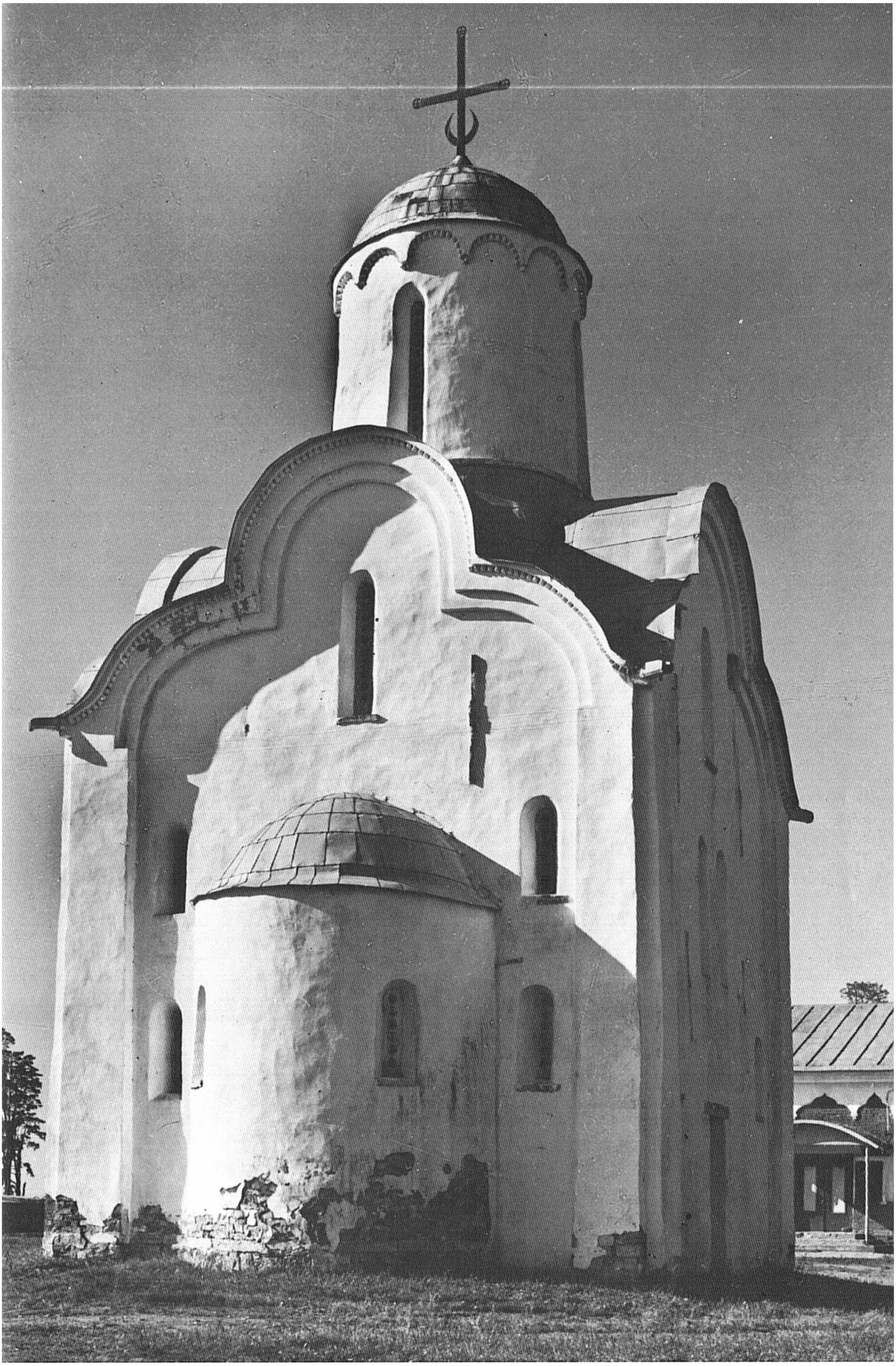
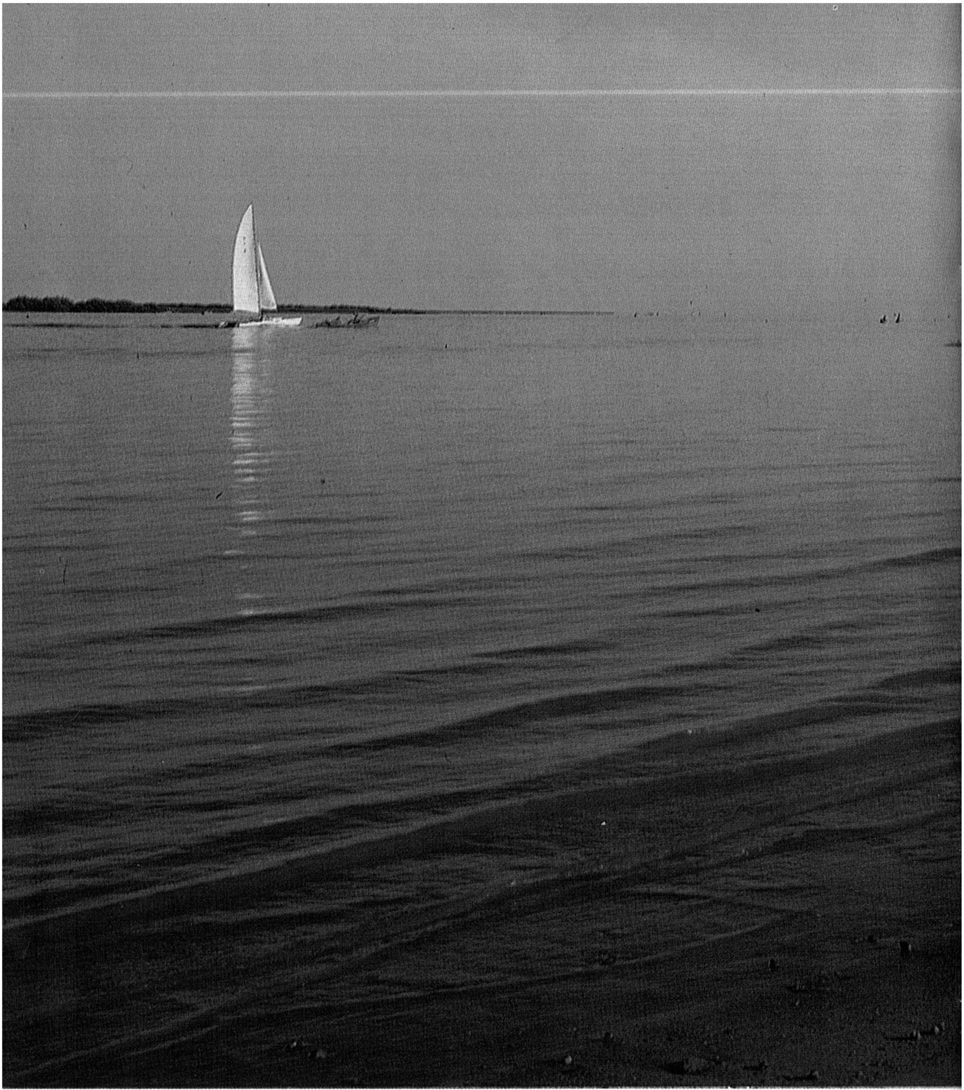
The Church of the Nativity of Our Lady-at-Peryn. Late 12th—early 13th century





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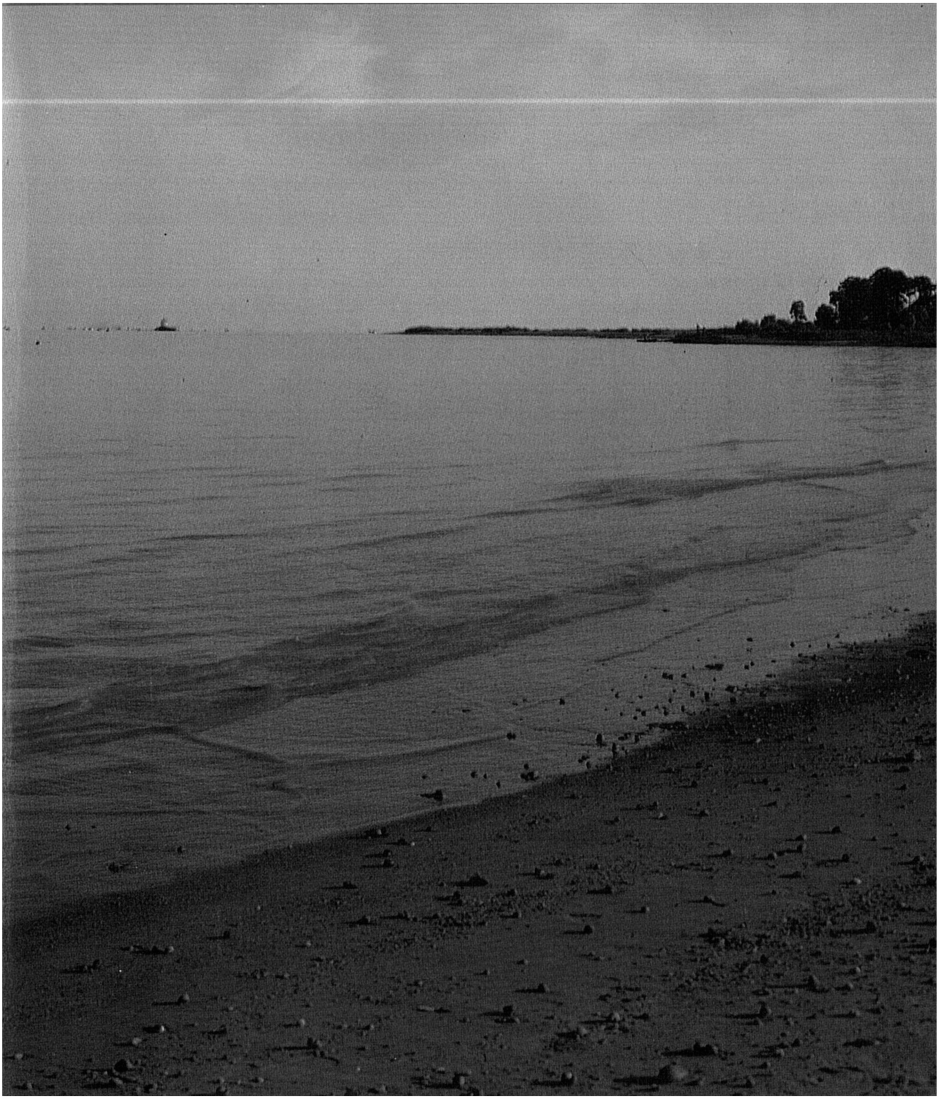
The Volkhov River near Peryn



НОВГОРОД

Архитектурные памятники и музеи

Новгородский историко-художественный музей-заповедник

Иллюстрированный путеводитель
(на английском языке)

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